

HIGH TIMES: **WILLIE NELSON**
RELEASES NEW
AUTOBIOGRAPHY

THIS WEEK'S NASH
FEATURING **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**

COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS
APRIL 20, 2015

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THE HIT LIST



J-Net with Oprah (center) and Jennifer Hudson

Own It

◀ **JENNIFER NETTLES'** Broadway run may be over, but that doesn't mean she is slowing down. The female half of Sugarland recently teamed with **JENNIFER HUDSON** to record "You Will," the new anthem for OWN, **OPRAH WINFREY's** television network.

Triple Play

▼ **ZAC BROWN BAND** is about to make Fenway Park history by playing three shows at the iconic home of baseball's Boston Red Sox Aug. 7-9. So now you'll have a chance to catch them, so to speak, on one of those days—that is, if any seats are still available. No other act has done three straight shows at Fenway, so it's a home run for Zac and the guys.



Randy Rogers (left) and Wade Bowen

Texas Two-Step

▲ In anticipation of the April 20 release of their collaborative album, *Hold My Beer, Vol. 1*, BFFs **RANDY ROGERS** and **WADE BOWEN** took their talents to Nashville's City Winery, where they performed songs from the new project, including the happy-go-lucky "Lady Bug" and honky-tonker "Good Luck With That."

Where There's Smoke

▼ We had been hearing the buzz about new duo **STRIKING MATCHES** for weeks before they arrived in our NASH studio to perform for the staff, and baby, where there's smoke, there is most definitely fire. A pair of uniquely different but crazy-talented guitar players, singers and songwriters, Justin Davis and Sarah Zimmerman more than lived up to the hype.



Gord Progression

▲ Get ready, America. Canadian country star **GORD BAMFORD** just hosted a special showcase in Banff, Alberta, for select guests and showed why he's taking home all the awards in his country. This year he'll be crossing the border into the U.S. of A with a sound that's equal parts Blake Shelton and George Strait.

THE JUKEBOX

Essential songs from the artists featured in this issue!

Reba McEntire
"Going Out Like That"

Reba and Jennifer Nettles
"Enough"

Thompson Square
"Trans Am"

Amy Grant and Vince Gill
"Rock of Ages"

Kristian Bush
"Southern Gravity"
"Walk Tall"

Florida Georgia Line
"Sippin' on Fire"
"Dirt"

The Oak Ridge Boys
"Elvira"

The Browns
"The Three Bells"

Jim Ed Brown
"Looking Back to See"

Grady Martin
"Pork Chop Stomp"

Darius Rucker
"Homegrown Honey"

Rainey Qualley
"Me and Johnny Cash and a Bottle of Wine"

John Moreland
"High on Tulsa Heat"

Look for this
Country Weekly
playlist on **rdio!**

COVER STORY

44

Reba
McEntire

Fans of the resilient redhead can rejoice over Reba's first new studio album in five years, *Love Somebody*. It's just one of the exciting projects she has planned for this year, including new additions to her clothing line and her Vegas shows with Brooks & Dunn.

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Amy Grant and husband Vince Gill make beautiful music in the studio on Amy's latest album.

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We celebrate the upcoming 50th Academy of Country Music Awards with 50 interesting and fun facts.

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The Oak Ridge Boys, Jim Ed Brown & The Browns and Grady Martin receive the call to enter the Country Music Hall of Fame.





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Florida Georgia Line's Brian Kelley and Tyler Hubbard are in the midst of a whirlwind tour that's taken them to Madison Square Garden in New York and overseas. Find out what else is in store for the dynamic duo. Plus, you can learn a few things about Dustin Lynch in a little game we call Check Yes or No.



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Darius Rucker.

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[LETTERS]



Editor in
chief Lisa
Konicki
with Reba

Dear Readers:

REBA McENTIRE is red hot! We've talked to Reba about signing her new record deal with Nash Icon Music and then her new single, "Going Out Like That." This time Reba visited us at our NASH campus offices and sat down to talk about her new album, *Love Somebody*. Our senior writer Bob Paxman spent time with the famous redhead, who opened up about releasing her first album in five years, adding to her Dillard's clothing line and becoming a spokes-

person for Outnumber Hunger. But get this . . . in her spare time, Reba is on to a new venture: cosmetics. So check out our cover story on page 44 as we get up close and more personal with Reba.

Because it is the 50th anniversary of the Academy of Country Music Awards, we decided to find 50 fun facts about the awards show dating all the way back to 1964, when the Academy was founded. We also had a fun photo shoot with Thompson Square, who showed off some of their modes of transport and who are very excited to share their new single, "Trans Am," with all of you.

In this week's *NASH* section, we go to New York City with the boys from **FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE**. The duo sold out their Madison Square Garden show and continue to light country music on fire. **DUSTIN LYNCH** is subjected to our Check Yes or No feature and we introduce newcomer **RAINEY QUALLEY** in Studio 615. All that and more in the pages of *Nash Country Weekly*.

Don't miss next week's issue, on stands April 20, as we sit down with **LADY ANTEBELLUM** and learn more about LadyAID and their charitable hearts.

See you next week!


LISA KONICKI, Editor in Chief

Tell Us What YOU Think!

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TRUE BLUE

Thank you for your Gary Allan cover and story in the April 6 issue [*Hangin' Tough*]. In today's world of country music we're hard-pressed to hear much of Gary Allan when there are such artists as Luke Bryan, Kenny Chesney and so on. Gary lays low and does his own thing but he is by no means unpopular. He has a very large and supportive fan base—most of us have been there since he first started in the music business. He may not be on the awards shows or the covers of magazines, but he is true to himself and to his fans and that's the most important thing.

—KRISTINE DOMENICK
Hillsville, Pa.

A MESSAGE TO ARTISTS

I don't know if any of you have ever been told thank you for the music you write and sing. In our lives we face adversities we think we may never get through. Country music has been a friend, a comforter to let us know we're never alone. [The recent] Country Gold [Concert] in Amarillo, Texas, gave that audience a look back at our past, patriotism and love of God and country. Country music will always be the No. 1 music in the U.S. Each entertainer gives more to the people than they realize by writing, singing about life. God bless and thank you.

—SHARON SERAFIN
Amarillo, Texas

OOPS, WE GOOFED

In the March 30 issue of your magazine you have Reba's birthday as March 25, 1955. Her real birthday is March 28, 1955.

—LINDSEY ROSS
Willshire, Ohio

EDITOR'S REPLY: Thank you for writing our correction for us. CW regrets the error.



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[THE BIG PICTURE]

HIGH TIMES

Willie Nelson helped late-night talk show host Jimmy Kimmel say good-bye to the SXSW festival in Austin, Texas, on a high note, you might say, with a live performance and some candid conversation.





the mix

ALL YOU WANT TO DO IS HANG OUT WITH THE STARS—AND THEN SOME!

For the latest music news,
go to **COUNTRYWEEKLY.COM**

PHOTO BY HEATHER WINES/CBS

Golden Celebration

BLAKE SHELTON and **LUKE BRYAN** will co-host the 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards on April 19. Broadcast live from AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas, the show will honor country music's best and brightest stars, with live performances from a bevy of artists, including Garth Brooks, George Strait, Miranda Lambert, Eric Church, Kenny Chesney, Jason Aldean and others. Check out page 50 for more on country music's party of the year.



MILE HIGH HIGHLIGHT
Garth Brooks takes photos with kids at the Denver Children's Hospital before his first Denver show in 18 years.

T BONE TO PICK

Producer/songwriter T Bone Burnett (left) worked with new duo Striking Matches (Sarah Zimmerman and Justin Davis) on their album *Nothing but the Silence*.



Follow Your AEROSMITH

Another rocker gone country? Well, perhaps. It's been confirmed that **AEROSMITH** frontman **STEVEN TYLER** is working on an album in Nashville with the Big Machine Label Group that will definitely lean toward the country side. He has apparently wanted to do a project in Nashville for some time. "There's just a piece of me that loves country so much," he said in a 2014 Twitter Q&A. Steven has collaborated with several Nashville artists, including Keith Urban and Carrie Underwood. Personally, we'd love to hear country-styled versions of "Sweet Emotion" or "Love in an Elevator," but we're guessing that this project will consist of new tunes.

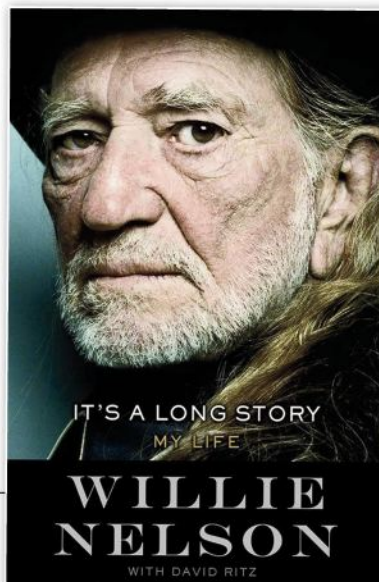


SLAM DUNK

TIM MCGRAW, Louisiana native and all-around sports buff, will narrate a new documentary film about the enduring relationship between basketball star Shaquille O'Neal and his college coach at LSU, Dale Brown. The film, titled *Shaq & Dale*, will premiere on the SEC Network on April 13 at 9 p.m. ET. Tim has starred in the football-themed movies *Friday Night Lights* and *The Blind Side*.

HIGH VOLUME

WILLIE NELSON's autobiography, *It's a Long Story: My Life*, will hit shelves on May 5. The Red Headed Stranger's memoirs will delve into growing up in the Great Depression, his life on the road, the meaning behind many of his songs and stories about friends like Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard and Kris Kristofferson.



Darn Tweetin'

Follow *Country Weekly* on Twitter @countryweekly

Speechless. Ya'll have changed our world since this past Friday. Jesus is good, and so are YOU. Thank you **#BuyMeaBoat**
Chris Janson
[@janson_chris](#)

Enjoying my Nissan Titan that I won on nbcthevoice from **@nissanusa**
Thank ya!!!
Craig Wayne Boyd
[@CWBYoull](#)

Some people get their intellectual nose so high in the air they can't look down and see the pile of dumb they're standing on.
Charlie Daniels
[@CharlieDaniels](#)

Craving some grape **@bigleaguechew** Spring has arrived **#playball**
Dustin Lynch
[@dustinlynch](#)

Just discovered you can watch the whole first season of **@EmpireFOX** on <http://FOX.com>...
#cantstopwontspot
Lindsay Ell
[@lindsayell](#)

Yo. Flying back home to Nashville. Great day.
Luke Bryan
[@LukeBryanOnline](#)

starting the new season of **@HouseofCards**. goodbye sleep. -ck
Lady Antebellum
[@ladyantebellum](#)



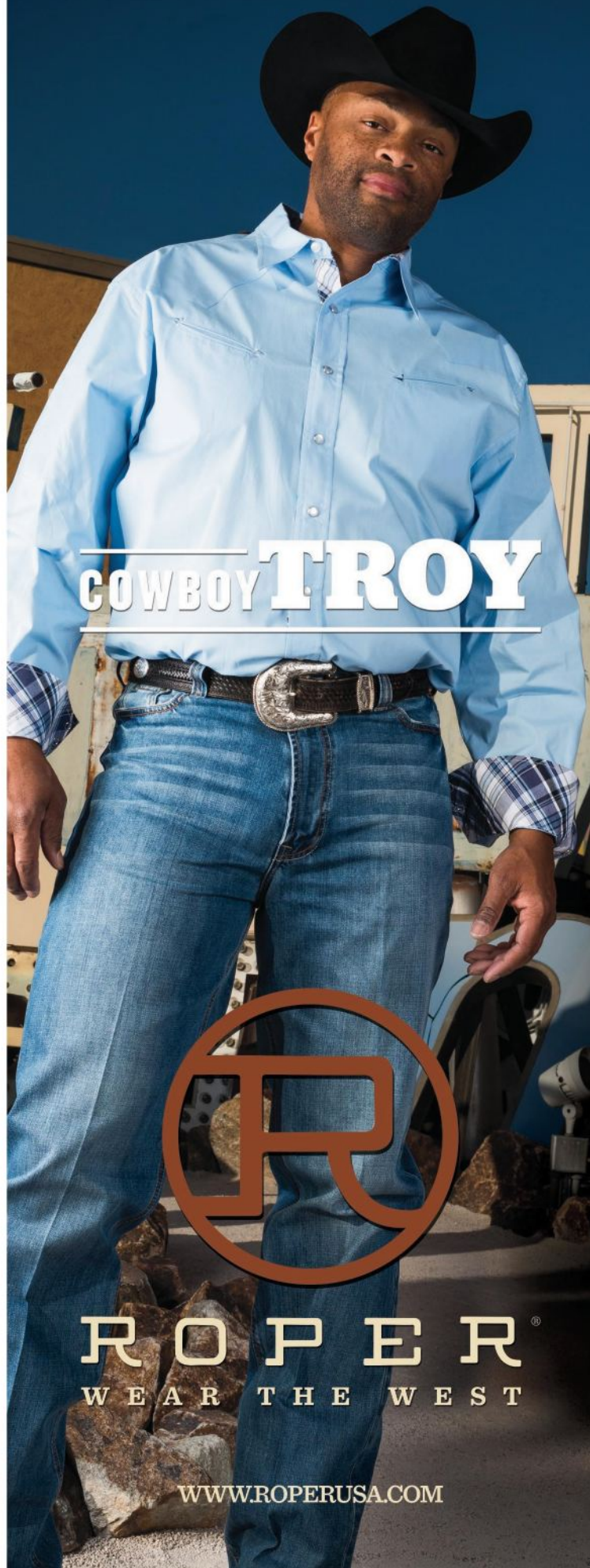
KENNY'S PENNIES

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY in Johnson City, Tenn., has launched a fundraising campaign to build a new 10,000-seat football stadium, and ETSU alum **KENNY CHESNEY** is the co-chair of the committee. ETSU is hoping to have the \$26.6 million stadium completed by the start of the 2017 season.



Hot Doggin'

NATHAN'S FAMOUS is touring the country to find contestants for its 2015 Fourth of July Hot Dog Eating Contest, and Music City is one of the stops. Nathan's hits Nashville during CMA Music Festival on June 13 at Tootsie's Country Music Fan Fest Alley. Contestants will have 10 minutes to eat as many hot dogs and buns as they can for a chance to qualify for the ESPN-televised finals at Coney Island. And, if you were wondering about the all-time record, 61 is the number to beat.



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CROSS- COUNTRY	What is your favorite kind of cereal?	If you were in a witness protection program, what would be your alias?	If you could bring someone famous back from the grave, who would you choose?	How do you like to relax?
 David Nail	<p>If I was 15 and I could eat whatever I wanted and not worry about anything, my go-to would be [Kellogg's] Cracklin' Oat Bran.</p>	<p>I guess I will have to retire it if I tell you right now [laughs]. Anytime I needed an alias, I would go by Willie Musial.</p>	<p>Oh, that person has changed so many times. Elvis. I would find it extremely fascinating to sit down with him for a few hours and pick his brain.</p>	<p>I don't necessarily know what relaxing is. My favorite thing to do when I have no responsibilities is to go to sporting events or watch NBA basketball. I love to go to the mall and walk around and people watch.</p>
 RaeLynn	<p>Cinnamon Toast Crunch.</p>	<p>Lola Binoir.</p>	<p>Elvis Presley.</p>	<p>Chilling on my couch, watching Disney.</p>
 Kimberly Schlapman of Little Big Town	<p>Lucky Charms. When I was a kid, my mother would never buy it. Once in a while, she would give in. It was always such a treat when we got to have it.</p>	<p>I always liked the name Sophia. So, something like Sophia Grace.</p>	<p>Mary, the mother of Jesus. There are a few things I could ask her [laughs].</p>	<p>Cooking for my family is my relaxation.</p>
 Kristian Bush	<p>What I shouldn't eat is Cinnamon Toast Crunch because that stuff is crack. But right now I try to get the most Kashi version of that to make myself feel better.</p>	<p>Not that I already have an alias, but Carl Michael Carmichael. Just call me Carl.</p>	<p>Does my mom count as famous? I lost my mom when I was 30. It was very sudden, and I would give anything to have her see that all this happened.</p>	<p>Two things: I watch some pretty terrible television. Other thing, I love my kids. We're at 9 and 12. Now they just hang out. It's like raising the two friends you always wanted [laughs].</p>
 Ashley Monroe	<p>Special K Chocolate Delight.</p>	<p>Oh my gosh, pass, I don't know. I can't think about that one. Maybe I <i>am</i> [in witness protection].</p>	<p>Elvis.</p>	<p>I sit on the couch with my two toothless dogs.</p>

COUNTRY WEEKLY

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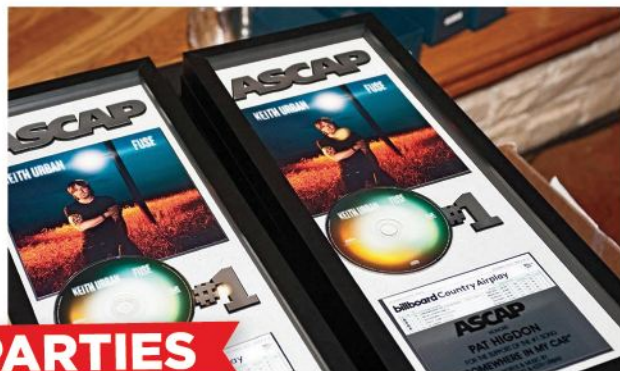




Nicole Kidman routinely comes out to support Keith.



J.T. Harding and Keith



PARTIES

“CAR” SMASH

KEITH URBAN NO. 1 PARTY MUSICIANS HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM, NASHVILLE

KEITH URBAN celebrated his latest chart-topping hit, “Somewhere in My Car,” with an intimate party held in Nashville on March 18. Joining Keith onstage to commemorate the song’s success was his co-writer, J.T. Harding. Following a stripped-down performance of

their song, where Keith played the piano and string musicians added to the plaintive vibe, both Keith and J.T. were presented with plaques, medallions and trophies.

They each took turns thanking the key people in their lives for helping get the song to the top and, of course, thanked each other for the opportunity to create such a special song. “Keith made this very easy for me,” J.T. said from the stage as a humbled Keith bowed his head while listening to him speak. “He knew that he wanted the lyric to be a reminiscent lyric. He had the guitar chords and even a melody idea. I just want to thank Keith for sharing his energy with me and

just [for] being a really cool guy.”

Keith also took a moment to thank his co-writer, as well as his wife, Nicole Kidman, who quietly watched her husband from the back of the room. “I get to make music, and the more I’ve been doing *American Idol*, the more appreciation I have for what I get to do,” Keith said, directing his attention to Nicole. “It’s such a blessing, and it’s deepened by our marriage and by our family. I can’t thank you enough, baby girl.”

The latest No. 1 brings Keith’s career total to 17 and J.T.’s to three. J.T. is also responsible for the Jake Owen smash “Alone With You” and Kenny Chesney’s “Somewhere With You.”



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COUNTRY WEEKLY

THE INSIDE STORIES ON COUNTRY MUSIC'S HOTTEST STARS



GROWING ROOTS

ONE OF THE PERKS OF being involved with the Zac Brown Band camp is being considered part of the Zac Brown family. New singer/songwriter Niko Moon found that out after being signed to Zac's Southern Ground Artists label. Before he signed with Zac, however, Niko spent time creating music and songs with his boss, learning the ropes of what it takes to write a hit song.

One summer, Niko and his band decided to get in a little downtime at Zac's river house in Dahlonega, Ga., to break away from the city life. The breathtaking mountain getaway spot provided the scenic inspiration Niko needed.

He began reflecting on life, in general, leading him to the conclusion that it isn't necessarily about obtaining anything more than the simple things, such as family and friends. "Those are the things that truly matter and are really important," says Niko.

Niko began to write down some verses and a chorus, but he tucked the lyrics away for several months. Later down the road, Niko was hanging out with Zac when he remembered the song he had started at the star's hidden retreat. Turned out Zac had also started working on a

"HOMEGROWN"

↑ Performed by
Zac Brown Band

→ Written by
Zac Brown,
Niko Moon,
Wyatt Durrette



WYATT'S WAYS

The songwriting of Wyatt Durrette has been a Zac Brown Band staple over the years, including singles such as "Chicken Fried," "Highway 20 Ride," "Knee Deep," "Colder Weather" and "Keep Me in Mind."

melodic idea, but hit a stopping point before finishing the thought. They decided to see what would happen if they merged the two ideas into one.

"He had some other ideas, too," Niko says. "I like to call them Zac-afying things. He had some ideas on what I already had on the verse and chorus, and basically ways to just improve it and to make it better."

Niko and Zac also turned to fre-

quent writing partner Wyatt Durrette for help on one line in particular, until Niko felt the song that he started was as authentic and true as he could possibly make it. "A lot of the time, we write songs and slave over them and bleed over them for days, sometimes weeks at a time, just to get it right," explains Niko. "It happens a lot with us, especially when it comes to things like love, relationships and heartbreak. Those are some of the most powerful things in our lives. You hear a lot of stuff about them, so we all have song ideas about similar things. Once in a while, they will all work together."

"Homegrown" was tucked away in Zac's back pocket for the band's forthcoming *Jekyll + Hyde* album. Zac believed in the song so much that it was released as the project's lead single. The accomplishment had Niko feeling like the job he set out to do that riverside afternoon had come full circle.

"We have a duty as songwriters to make something as real as possible from our experiences and experiences from those around us," Niko says of songwriting. "We hope it can connect with people in a sincere way, and this song did just that."

— ALANNA CONAWAY



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At left, Rose layers multiple necklaces from the Rod & Rose collection, but here, she simply wears the Captiva bracelet on her left arm.



The Bead Goes On

As a songwriter, **ROSE FALCON** knows how to structure melodies, arrange chords and craft words into songs that can make you laugh, make you cry or make you want to move, like Eric Paslay's chart-topping "Friday Night," which she co-wrote with Eric and Rob Crosby. But she has another outlet that she developed with husband Rodney Atkins and Johnny Loves June founder Donna Schons.

"Donna's motto is 'Let what you love be what you do,'" Rose explains. "I just wish everybody had a job that they really loved

like the way I love my job. And I wanted to work with someone who is as passionate about making jewelry as I am about songwriting and performing."

Natural druzy, turquoise and agate, Herkimer diamonds, supple deer leather, feathers and crystals are some of the elements utilized for the unique bracelets, necklaces and earrings that Rose and Rodney both design and wear. "A lot of people think it's weird that Rodney would want jewelry, but what he's looking for is something that is meaningful to him. And that's kind

of what I'm looking for, too. So we named all the jewelry after family members and friends. The Eva Gray necklace is named after the woman who fostered Rodney when he was a baby. And the Captiva bracelet is where we got married."

Rose describes the Rod & Rose collection from Johnny Loves June as "not intimidating." She says, "I just want to make pieces that aren't fancy. They're not wearing you, you're wearing them."

Check out the collection at johnnylovesjune.com.

— TAMMY RAGUSA



Both Rodney and Rose actually wear their pieces, which are all available at johnnylovesjune.com.



Her Table to Yours

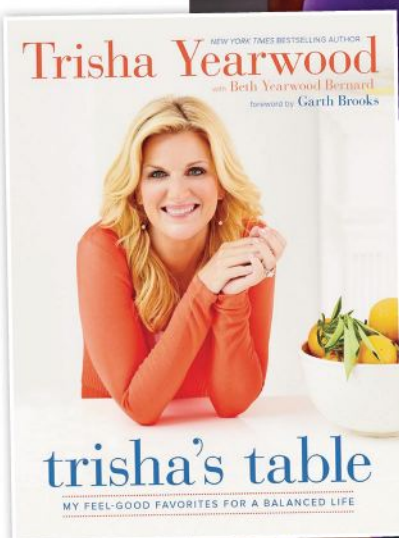
TRISHA YEARWOOD SHARES A HEALTHY RECIPE FROM HER NEW COOKBOOK.

TRISHA YEARWOOD IS cultivating a tasty second career as one of the country's best-loved cooks. She currently hosts her own Emmy-winning series on Food Network, *Trisha's Southern Kitchen*, and has just released her third cookbook, *Trisha's Table: My Feel-Good Favorites for a Balanced Life*.

Her latest effort sticks to her ever-evolving philosophy on proper nutrition. "I have adopted an 80/20 rule," Trisha says. "Eighty percent of the time I make good choices, 20 percent of the time I let myself splurge a little." The recipe she shares here, raspberry chicken, leans toward the healthy side, as do many of the dishes in *Trisha's Table*. But you'll also find some mouth-watering Southern-style favorites, including desserts and a fabulous spaghetti casserole.

And to help with your culinary skills, check out Trisha's new line of cookware, which she's introduced with the Cookware Company. You'll be a star in your own kitchen—just like Trisha.

— BOB PAXMAN



Raspberry Chicken

SERVES 4

4 boneless, skinless chicken breast cutlets

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ cup all-purpose flour

¼ cup olive oil

1 large shallot, thinly sliced

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

½ cup white wine

1 cup chicken stock

6 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced (about 3 cups)

1 cup fresh or frozen raspberries

1 tsp. freshly grated lemon zest

2 tbsp. salted butter

1 tbsp. balsamic vinegar

SEASON the chicken with salt and pepper. **PLACE** the flour in a large, shallow bowl. Dredge the chicken in it and shake off any excess.

In a large skillet set over medium heat, **HEAT** the olive oil until it shimmers, about 2 minutes. **ADD** the chicken and sear until slightly brown, 2 to 4 minutes on each side. **REMOVE** from the skillet and set aside.

ADD the shallot and garlic to the same pan and cook for 1 minute. **ADD** the wine and stock, and cook until reduced slightly, about 10 minutes. Add the sliced mushrooms, reduce the heat to low, return the chicken to the skillet, cover, and **COOK** for 10 minutes. **STIR** in the raspberries, lemon zest, butter and balsamic vinegar.

Continue cooking, uncovered, until the butter melts, about 1 minute. If needed, add salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer the chicken to plates and **SPOON** the raspberry sauce and mushrooms over each piece.



[QUESTIONS]

Kristian Bush

With a new album, *Southern Gravity*, and hit single, “Trailer Hitch,” under his belt, Kristian Bush has plenty to talk about these days. But rather than discuss music, we decided to mix things up a bit by having Sugarland’s male side dig a little deeper about things he cannot live without and the day he gave London tourists an unforgettable experience.

— ALANNA CONAWAY

What is your favorite time of the day?

I’m usually a sunset person. I love the colors of sunset, but I also love that it’s a transition in your day. You can’t fight it. I can fight the morning. I can sleep late enough and it’s already bright outside [and] you don’t have to go through that transition. But when it comes to sunset, I totally want to see it.

What are three things you can’t live without?

Probably my phone, my headphones and my children.

What is something not a lot of people know about you?

I’m a sci-fi fan. I’m a huge *Doctor Who* fan. I grew up as a big *Star Wars* fan. I go to Comic-Con. I watch tons of those television shows you wouldn’t think I watch, like *Warehouse 13*.

Were you a big fan of *The X-Files*?

I loved *The X-Files*! I’m having a little bit of a moment. Gillian Anderson [*The X-Files*’ Agent Scully] has just come out of a little bit of hiding to do *The Fall*. I might be always in search of a girlfriend that is like Gillian Anderson. I don’t know why. I was just madly in love with her. I didn’t realize how far in I was until someone said, “Hey, have you seen the new show *The Fall* with Gillian Anderson?” I was like, “Shut it! She’s back?” There are very few people I would get posters of and put on my wall, but she . . . man [*laughs*].

Where is the strangest place you’ve ever written a song?

There’s a hotel in London that is in front of the London Eye. I was there for two days. I had taken my guitar out on this tiny little balcony that looked like a fire escape. People were kind of outside the balcony like 10 feet away from me. The reason this is so memorable to me was people were slowly—like a snail’s pace—moving across my vision and watching me do this. To the point where they were kind of looking down at me through their feet as they were approaching me, and then looking up as they were going down [*laughs*]. Thankfully, I got the song done before anybody came back around.

What is your favorite home-cooked meal?

I love pimento cheese. This particular pimento cheese that we make in Atlanta is like seven or eight cheeses. It’s not really mayonnaisey. It’s much more cheesy. I just think it’s fantastic.

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PERFECT HARMONY

AMY GRANT is making beautiful music in the studio and at home.

STORY BY TAMMY RAGUSA

IN 1994, A FEW YEARS BEFORE they became husband and wife, Amy Grant and Vince Gill sang, *Love with a firm foundation ain't ever gonna fall*, in the hit song "House of Love." The line turned out to be fortuitous: the one-time friends became a couple who recently celebrated 15 years of marriage, making beautiful music together and being each other's biggest fans.

Even in separate phone conversations on different days, the couple is completely in tune with each other. The mere mention of one's name to the other brings audible joy that stretches through the telephone lines. And, fortunately, we get to hear that a lot as we discuss Amy's new project, *Be Still and Know: Hymns & Faith*, which Vince played on and co-produced.

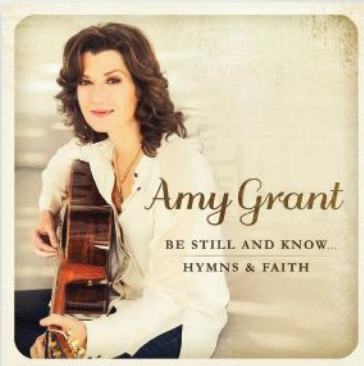
Despite Amy's characteristic gentle voice, you can hear her pride in Vince and the project. "He's so great. Oh my goodness, his

depth of creativity is pretty astounding," she says of her talented husband. "But his singing is so effortless, and every time he does anything live, I don't want to be distracted. I want to hear every note because it's going to be a brand-new fresh approach, he never phones it in."

He may not phone it in, but he certainly dialed it up when he and Amy gave the timeless "Rock of Ages" a groovy R&B feel. "This kind of project was so fun for me because I'm not a church kid and I don't know those songs," explains Vince. "So to me, it was about as fresh a perspective on some of those things than maybe you could want. But to me, I don't have all those preconceived notions

of how those songs sounded in church, so I got to follow my ears and my music."

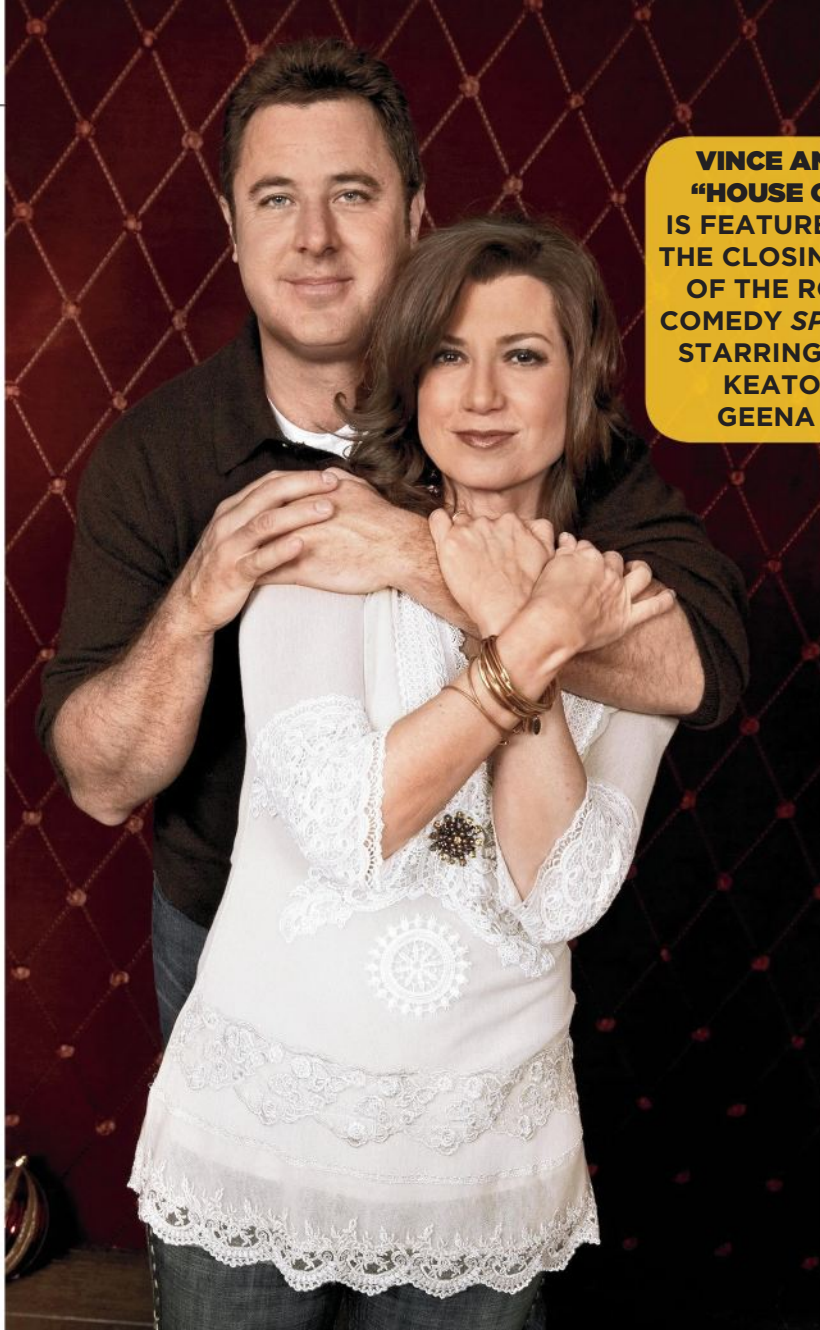
After a pause, Vince recalls Amy's reaction when he suggested the unique production to "Rock of Ages." "She'd say, 'My great-grandmother would roll over in her grave if



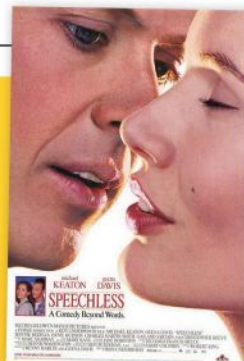


AMY WAS JUST 16 WHEN SHE RELEASED HER SELF-TITLED DEBUT ALBUM, A LAND-MARK RECORD THAT BROUGHT CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN MUSIC TO MAINSTREAM AUDIENCES.





**VINCE AND AMY'S
"HOUSE OF LOVE"
IS FEATURED DURING
THE CLOSING CREDITS
OF THE ROMANTIC
COMEDY *SPEECHLESS*,
STARRING MICHAEL
KEATON AND
GEENA DAVIS.**



AMY GRANT CONTINUED

she heard this as an R&B number,” he says, laughing. “But all in all, it was just being musical. And Amy, she’s the kind of artist that, to me, is Johnny Cash-like in that the sound of her voice is two things—it’s commanding and it’s compelling. And when you have that going for you, you don’t have to mess with anything. You just get out of the way.”

Be Still and Know is predominantly traditional hymns, some from previously released projects, as well as the fan favorite “El Shaddai.” “I know it sounds weird, but it’s like serving

up a favorite recipe, it’s OK to keep doing it,” says Amy, laughing at her own analogy. “If pot roast is the best thing I make and I go, ‘Oh, I haven’t made you pot roast, yet? Well let me serve it up again.’” She also added an almost Celtic version of “Power in the Blood” and the contemporary original tune “Be Still.” However, it’s her cover of Eric Paslay’s “Deep as It Is Wide,” on which Eric and Sheryl Crow guest, that evokes a special memory for Amy. “That was like the soundtrack when my mom was passing away. And I loved the song before that, but it was just so many

more reasons to play it at top volume,” she says softly.

Outside the studio, life is even more blissful for the couple whose children are, as Amy puts it, “launching.” “I have two daughters in New York right now and a son who is an inventor,” she explains. “Corrina is taller than I am and 18 months from getting her learner’s permit, and she sings like a bird. They’re all very creative . . . in different ways.” Vince’s daughter Jenny is also an accomplished vocalist who performs with Vince and Amy.

As inspiring and sweet as *Be Still and Know* is as a collection of music, even more inspiring and sweet is the love between Vince and Amy. That extends beyond home even to working in the studio together. “Vince is so encouraging and complimentary, but he hears things,” says Amy. “Really the biggest thing is his feel of the pocket is much more, he grooves a lot more than I do. And so I say, ‘You hear things I don’t hear, so just help me.’ So he’ll ask me to sing things that are kind of a challenge for me, but he’s so encouraging. Sometimes I’m worn out by the time we finish in the studio, but it’s never a bad situation.”

For Vince, it’s less about challenging his beautiful bride and more about shining a spotlight on her immense talent. “Well . . . to me it’s way more rewarding than doing my own project in that I get to really lift up the person I love most,” he says. “You can’t get a better gift than that.”

And despite being challenged at times, Amy knows her husband is always on her side. “Just to know you’ve got somebody that believes in you,” she says, “that’s huge.” **CW**

NASH MAGAZINE

16
*Extra
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CHECK
YES OR NO
**DUSTIN
LYNCH**

STUDIO 615
**RAINEY
QUALLEY**

KIX
BROOKS IN
THE STUDIO
WITH
**ZAC
BROWN**

FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE

**THE BOYS OF SUMMER
TAKE YOU INSIDE THEIR
WILD LIVE SHOW**

**CMC
ROCKS!**

COUNTRY GOES DOWN
UNDER WITH . . . **KACEY
MUSGRAVES, LADY A
AND MORE!**



WIZARDS of OZ

Country music enjoys a huge following in North America, but there's quite a healthy appetite for it in the Land Down Under as well (as if Keith Urban wasn't already proof enough). Speaking of Keith, he fared well at the 2015 CMC Music Awards, which were held March 12 at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre in Brisbane and highlighted homegrown talent like Adam Brand as well as international stars. Additionally, a whole slew of country favorites from the States made their way to Australia for the CMC Rocks Festival, a celebration of all things roots and country held March 13–15 at the Willowbanks Raceway in Queensland. They may have some crazy animals in their backyard, but those Aussies certainly prove that country has global appeal.



Lady Antebellum harmonizes beautifully.



Big Kenny gives a show of international unity.



Lee Brice (right) shows off his guitar licks.



Kacey Musgraves



Chase Bryant



Kristian Bush throws himself into a song.



Maddie & Tae happily greet a fan.

Laura Bell Bundy



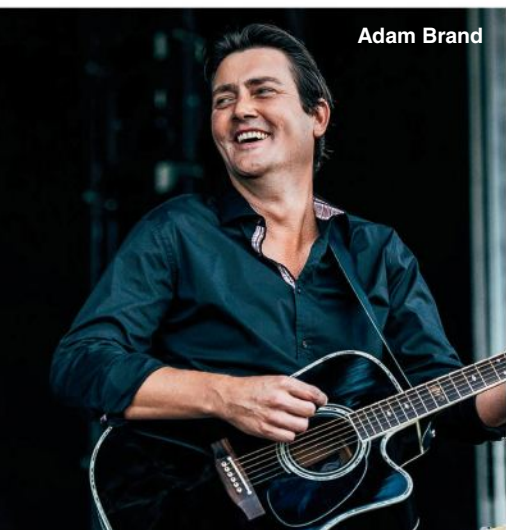
Chris Young

Aussie favorite
Troy Cassar-Daley



A guitar pull featuring (from left)
Chase Bryant, Kristian Bush, CMC
Male Artist of the Year Morgan Evans,
Lee Brice and Jeffrey Steele

Adam Brand



Australian John
Williamson



Jeffrey Steele



CONNECT WITH THE PASSION OF COUNTRY

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COUNTRY FOR LIFE



FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
IS LIVING LIFE TO THE
FULL EXTENT IN 2015.

GLORY DAYS



STORY BY JON FREEMAN
PHOTOS BY JIM WRIGHT

Typically, a bucket list is one of those things you might start compiling slightly ahead of your twilight years, in hopes of having few regrets when the inevitable end comes. But Florida Georgia Line's Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley, neither of whom has yet hit 30, use the term frequently in the context of their rapidly expanding musical career.

Considering they've already sold out Madison Square Garden, toured Europe and earned their first ACM Entertainer of the Year nomination—on top of a couple more No. 1s and hit videos—in these early months of 2015, the guys' use of the term seems pretty warranted. Clearly, Tyler and Brian aren't waiting around to start ticking those items off their lists.

If you ask them to pick a single favorite moment so far this year, forget it. They need the multiple-choice option.

"If we're just talking about 2015, so far selling out MSG and then going to London and selling out the O2 with Luke [Bryan] are two of the highlights," says Tyler, as the duo prepares to play the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. "We've already experienced a ton of amazing things this year with the No. 1s and the music videos and the things, that's happened just in a short period of time."

That sold-out show at Madison Square Garden took place Feb. 25, bringing Tyler and Brian (plus guests Thomas Rhett and Frankie Ballard) in front of 13,000 fans at one of music's most iconic venues. It's a sort of rite of passage for musicians of all stripes, but particularly among country artists: if you can fill up MSG, you've got it made. Luke Bryan, Blake Shelton and Jason Aldean—the three biggest male artists in country right now—have all sold out the venue in recent years, not to mention the superstar pop and rock artists who have played there over the years.

"That's what you work so hard for, man," says Brian, who notes that he and Tyler flew family and friends in for



BRIAN AND TYLER'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

Florida Georgia Line enjoyed another first in early March, leaving the U.S. for the C2C (Country to Country) Festival with Jason Aldean, Luke Bryan, Lee Ann Womack and others. The tour, which hit London's O2 arena as well as Scotland, Ireland and Norway showed the excitement European fans have for the many flavors of country music in 2015.

"Country music is so much bigger than everybody wants to put a label on it," says Brian. "It's so hard to put

a label on something so broad and so big. I'm not just talking about our music, I'm talking about country music in general. There's so many different brands. That's why I think it's so hot right now, because there's so many different sounds and it's exciting, it's fresh."

Brian was even surprised that a non-single of FGL's had become well-known, so they added it back into their set.

"They don't have many country music stations, if any, over in Europe, and they're big on video content," he explains. "So 'It's Just What We Do,' we have a live video, so we put that back in our set over in Europe and it crushed."

In Norway and Sweden, where English is not the first language, Brian was struck by the fan engagement. "Even if it was in a different language, they were singing pretty much every word," he says. "And they all had smiles on their faces, they were all drinking, having a good time and putting their hands up and it really didn't feel like we were outside the States, because the fans were so amazing. Being over there really brought a new excitement, a breath of fresh air, a new breath of life for our whole team and crew and band and everybody on the road, Tyler and I included."



Clothes were shed and bottles of water were thrown when Florida Georgia Line played for a rowdy crowd at Madison Square Garden.





Brian and Tyler were made honorary New York Rangers at the show, which also included a VIP pre-show event (below).



As you might expect of any decent arena show, FGL's stop at MSG boasted plenty of smoke and a few thousand streams of confetti.



FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE CONT.

the show. "I remember growing up and hearing about MSG. And Luke I think played it a year ago right after we got off tour with him. It's the guys we toured with and look up to and idols [who] have sold this place out and left some really good energy in those walls, because we were feeling it that night."

Tyler wholeheartedly agrees with his musical partner. "It was a very surreal moment, kind of a spiritual moment," he says. "You just have a quick little flashback to the last three years of hard work and dedication and pushing to get where you're at. That was one of those moments before we hit the stage at MSG. We did our ritual and got together with our band, just kind of reminded everybody, 'Hey, man, this is a dream come true for everyone.'"

And when those lights went down in New York, the fans responded in

kind by belting out the words to FGL's current single, "Sippin' on Fire," with the same passion they exhibit for the duo's breakout smash, "Cruise."

"The fans were incredible. In New York City, selling out MSG to a country music concert, that blows me away," adds Brian. "I'm very humbled by that and we're so excited to be a part of this movement."

Those fans will have a chance to come through for Florida Georgia Line once again at the Academy of Country Music Awards on April 19, where the duo is nominated for Entertainer of the Year alongside Jason, Luke, Miranda Lambert and Garth Brooks. The prestigious honor is one of a couple awards chosen through a combination of professional member and online fan voting.

Tyler and Brian were in Phoenix getting ready to play a Super Bowl-related concert when they heard the news,

which was delivered to them by actor Kevin Hart and rapper Nelly.

"It's the top of what you work for, Entertainer of the Year," acknowledges Tyler. "Whether or not we win, we're just happy to be nominated. We're happy to be in the category with all the amazing entertainers and just to be a part of country music and the ACMs is gonna be a huge night. We're buddies with everybody that's in the category, so either way we're gonna be celebrating." FGL is nominated for four additional honors, including Single of the Year for their song "Dirt."

As for what new milestones come after that event, it's all still up in the air. "Hopefully we can get a song with Wiz Khalifa out, that'd be pretty fun," says Brian. "We've got some other tricks up our sleeve as well."

It might actually be time for them to start revising those bucket lists. ■

An American Band

KIX TALKS TO **ZAC BROWN** ABOUT MUSIC THAT DOESN'T NEED BOUNDARIES AND PIMPING OUT HIS OWN SONGS.

KIX: Between Dave Grohl and Chris Cornell, you've got quite the career going here with the rock guys.

ZAC: It's pretty amazing to kind of be colleagues with people who were superheroes when you were younger. Guys like Dave Grohl; he's everything you want him to be and 10 times more. I cold-called Chris Cornell and told him I wrote that song ["Heavy Is the Head"] for him to sing and sent it to him. It wasn't finished but we had it far enough along where he could hear it and know what the deal was. He was cool enough to sing it at his place, and a couple of weeks later he e-mailed it to me—and what a voice.

KIX: It seems like the country audience comes from that area as well.

ZAC: We're not sheltered in any way now by what's just available. It's not just what's on the radio or what CDs

you get. People are barraged with so many different things. To me, music is like a piece of art. It either makes you feel something or it doesn't. And to me good music, whatever kind it is, whatever kind of rhythm, tone, whatever kind of box you put it in, if it makes you feel something, the emotion that it was intended to create, then it's good music.

KIX: What do the award shows mean to you?

ZAC: The exposure that it gains is the biggest thing for us. Getting to be in people's homes for that evening for that part. Just getting to show what

we do on the stage is the most important thing. Also when we are there getting to see the other artists that we are fans of perform.

KIX: Do you ever see yourself as a songwriter for other people?

ZAC: It's not something that I actively do. Writing enough songs to boil down for our records and for our shows and what we do keeps us pretty busy. I definitely have stuff that I'm not gonna record, and if other people want to do it, I don't pimp it out, but if someone wanted to and had one that knew about it, I would be fine with them recording it.

KIX: Are you gonna have Chris [Cornell] out on the road with you?

ZAC: Anytime that he's willing to pop in, you never know. I don't have any idea what's going to come about after this album gets out there.

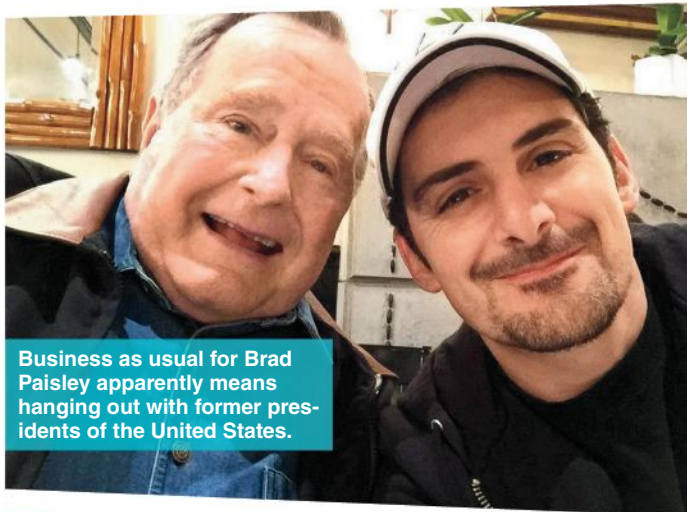


Award-winning musician **KIX BROOKS** hosts the national radio shows *American Country Countdown* and *Kickin' It With Kix*.

NASH | *ON the SCENE*

OUT AND ABOUT WITH YOUR FAVORITE STARS!

Well, at least we know where Chris Stapleton's head is at when it comes to Little Big Town's current single.



Business as usual for Brad Paisley apparently means hanging out with former presidents of the United States.



This confirms our suspicion: Carrot Top is the long-lost fourth member of Rascal Flatts.



The Pretenders' Chrissie Hynde is still every bit as rock 'n' roll as those hairy dudes in The Cadillac Three.



The Internet was broken into a million pieces with the news that J-Hud had finally met J-Net.



Barbara Mandrell reenacts a scene from a classic Alfred Hitchcock film.



RAINEY QUALLEY

WHEN

March 9

SONGS PERFORMED

"Turn Me On Like the Radio"

"Never Mine"

"Me and Johnny Cash
and a Bottle of Wine"**NASH FAVORITE**"Me and Johnny Cash
and a Bottle of Wine"**WHAT'S NEW**

It's a pretty big deal for any artist to make their debut on the stage of the historic Ryman Auditorium, but when Rainey made her debut, the North Carolina native did it opening for Willie Nelson.

SHOWTIME

Behind the microphone, Rainey was musically cool, confident and bold with a sultry, gutsy voice that she credits to listening to a lot of soulful women

like Etta James and Aretha Franklin. But she also revealed a zany sense of humor and a quick laugh that is contagious in the "Meet Rainey Qualley" video on her website.

STAGE MANAGEMENT

"My dad plays guitar and taught me to play guitar when I was a teenager. He lives in Panama now, but when he comes back to Asheville, where I grew up, he has a jam band and he and the guys get together. My father was definitely influential. And when I was a kid, I would start writing songs in my head as I was going to sleep. But when I was real young, I didn't write them down. But I love poetry. I love e.e. cummings and Jack Kerouac, so I wrote poetry and loved to sing, and in my late teens I started combining the two."

THE SINGLE FILE

"I co-wrote 'Turn Me On Like the Radio' with John Ramey and Jeffrey East. I was living in L.A. at the time, and on my very first songwriting trip to Nashville, I met up with Jeffrey and John. I

had written with some people in L.A. and New York, but nothing like this. I had never met these people before and had just flown into Nashville and was sitting in [ZMG president] Russ Zavitsos's house. We just met up and were like, 'Well, let's write a song.' And that first day, we wrote 'Turn Me On Like the Radio.' I was there for a week and we wrote eight songs."



PHOTOS BY CARISSA RICCARDI



KIX BROOKS RADIO

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Dustin Lynch

If you're wondering "Where It's At," Dustin Lynch can tell you—yep, yep—in a game we like to call Check Yes or No.

Have you ever picked up a girl in a bar?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Ever run out of gas?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you sing in the shower?

YES ☒ NO ☐

If I gave you an iguana would you keep it?

YES ☐ NO ☒

Do you like root beer?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Have you ever done anything you regret?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you drink milk or juice out of the carton?

YES ☐ NO ☒

Have you ever worn pajamas to the grocery store?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Did you like high school?

YES ☐ NO ☒

Do you eat the crust?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Have you ever played hooky?

YES ☒ NO ☐

Do you wish this was over?

YES ☐ NO ☒





SOMETHING BIG IS COMING.

June 8

NASH | SOUND BITES

WHAT YOUR FAVORITE STARS ARE SAYING ON NASH-FM

It's got a great melody. It's up-tempo. It's catchy. It's sassy; great lyrics. It's everything you want in a song.

REBA McENTIRE

on her new single, "Going Out Like That"

I spent years writing songs and that's all I did. I got paid to write songs so that your goal is to get other artists to record them.

COLE SWINDELL

It's true. You stop caring what other people think. You stop caring how you play something. You just play it and it comes out how it comes out.

GARY ALLAN

agreeing with his dad's advice

People relate to that story of that kind of painful, somewhat pathetic reminiscing, desperate, you know?

KEITH URBAN

on the success of "Somewhere in My Car"

I am in the studio, so I'm very excited. Definitely making that happen and also very excited about going on the road this summer.

SHANIA TWAIN

That show is so iconic. I grew up listening to it and watching it. So, it was big honor and a good milestone for us.

ZAC BROWN

about his performance on *Saturday Night Live*

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WHITE'S MERCANTILE

Nestled in the heart of Nashville's growing 12South district is a hip and fun twist on the old-timey, rural general store. White's Mercantile is retail overstimulation at its most glorious. Owned by Holly Williams, daughter of Hank Williams Jr., White's has a vast collection of goodies from casual apparel, unique accessories and eye-catching artwork to tasty treats and aromatic candles—items for the table, the pantry, the wall and the wardrobe. But it isn't just the ever-changing inventory that is so delightful. White's Mercantile provides one of the most charming shopping experiences in Nashville. It's homey and organized with beautiful cabinetry and displays, and the staff is happy to help you find the perfect gift for someone special . . . yourself. Do not walk out without the salted caramels from Shotwell Candy or a yummy Thistle Farms lotion.

— TAMMY RAGUSA



Beautiful Holly Williams might outshine her fun collection of merchandise at White's Mercantile.

LOVE

IS

ALL

AROUND

**REBA
McENTIRE'S**

**FIRST STUDIO
ALBUM IN
FIVE YEARS
REVOLVES
AROUND
ROMANCE,
IN ALL ITS
EBBS AND
FLOWS.**

**STORY BY
BOB PAXMAN**



Reba McEntire isn't one to complain. After all, life is good at age 60 for the tireless entertainer who shows no signs of the vagaries of age. She's about to release her first new studio album in five years, *Love Somebody*, has been named a spokesperson for an Outnumber Hunger campaign and is adding to her signature clothing line at Dillard's.

"I like to stay busy," sums up the perpetual-motion redhead. So no gripes there, certainly.

But you'll hear no discouraging words, either, when it comes to the state of today's music. Where many of her contemporaries spend an inordinate amount of time putting down the modern sounds, Reba tends to take the high road and be much more accepting. Perhaps that's why she remains a viable player in a business that often delights in making you



irrelevant. But as she sits comfortably in a chair at the *NASH/Country Weekly* offices, Reba will admit that there's one theme she wishes would come back into favor.

"I miss the romance," Reba says after a brief sigh, an apparent reference to party anthems and bro-country romps. "We need a lot more love [in music] these days. I mean, I like romance," she adds with a playful grin. "What woman doesn't?"

Reba is ready to supply the romance quotient with *Love Somebody*, set for release April 14. It's her first studio album since 2010's *All the Women I Am* and Reba notes that the record revolves around one word—and the word is "love," as The Beatles once declared. "That is the theme of the album," she says. "Whether it's falling in or falling out of it, good love or bad love, that's what it's about."

A good number of the selections seem to aim toward the adult woman, perhaps in her 40s, who's having her own issues with relationships. The tone is set right off the bat with the first single, "Going Out Like That," which profiles a lady who's not taking a breakup (or divorce, which might be implied) lying down. "She's been jilted and the guy thinks she's going to be sitting home crying," Reba explains. "But no—she's not having any of that. She's going to go out and have a good time with the girls."

Another tune from the record, "I'll Go On," would also appear to speak to the same target audience. But the more Reba listened to this and other tracks from *Love Somebody*, she realized that she had something to say for all age groups.

"Originally, I thought that the album would relate to mainly older women, and nobody really speaks for them these days," Reba says after a thoughtful pause. "But I have really found out that young people nowadays can relate to 'I'll Go On' and things like that. One of the writers for that song [Ella Mae Bowen] evidently was a teenager when she wrote it, and I kind of thought, you know, where is this coming from? She's an old soul to be writing that kind of song. So, I'm thinking now that this is ageless music that everybody can relate to."

Certainly, any woman of some experience can see herself in "She Got Drunk Last Night," which does not take the road you might assume. It's a poignant piece written by the estimable Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally, revolving around a woman who's trying to muster up enough courage to call up the guy who ousted her from his life. This is no party tune or ode to raucous good times.

"That's another relatable song," Reba says with a laugh evidently borne of experience. "When you have to get drunk enough to make that phone call, that's sad. And it's sad but true. It's really your authentic country song," she adds. "It wasn't anything to be made light of. It was definitely a serious song about being so down. That's about the last straw."

Hope, however, springs eternal in "That's When I



For her latest album, *Love Somebody*, Reba culled songs from some of today's hot young writers, including Ella Mae Bowen (above left) for "I'll Go On" and frequent writing partners Brandy Clark and Shane McAnally (above right), who teamed up on "She Got Drunk Last Night."

Knew," which expresses the joy of finding a new love. "That is a very positive song," Reba agrees. "When that special person comes into your life and takes all the attention away from the past, that's a huge step forward. It gives you hope and lets you know that your life's not over. That is one of the songs I found early on."

Reba's especially pumped about the track "Enough," which features Jennifer Nettles on backing vocal. Jennifer, in a way, is a contemporary version of Reba, as she's spread her talents to the Broadway stage with a starring role in the hit musical *Chicago*. As fans know, Reba expanded her résumé when she took the lead role in a revival of the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* in 2001, to considerable acclaim.

"I love her writing, I love her singing," Reba says of Jennifer. "She's a great gal, very hardworking and a great personality. She is absolutely someone I have wanted to work

LOVE SOMEBODY

TRACK LIST & WRITING CREDITS

1 "Going Out Like That"

(Rhett Akins, Ben Hayslip, Jason Sellers)

2 "Enough" featuring Jennifer Nettles

(Kelly Archer, Aaron Scherz, Emily Shackelton)

3 "She Got Drunk Last Night"

(Brandy Clark, Shane McAnally)

4 "Livin' Ain't Killed Me Yet"

(Tommy Lee James, Laura Veltz)

5 "That's When I Knew"

(Jim Collins, Ashley Gorley)

6 "I'll Go On"

(Ella Mae Bowen, Tommy Lee James)

7 "Until They Don't Love You"

(Shane McAnally, Lori McKenna, Josh Osborne)

8 "Promise Me Love"

(Nicole Fernandez, Jason Miller, Susan Ruth)

9 "Just Like Them Horses"

(Liz Hengber, Tommy Lee James)

10 "Love Somebody"

(Sam Hunt, Shane McAnally, Josh Osborne)

11 "Love Land"

(Tom Douglas, Rachel Thibodeau)

12 "Pray for Peace"

(Reba McEntire)

13 "Whatever Way It Hurts the Least"

(Brandy Clark, Tommy Lee James, Josh Osborne)

14 "More Than Just Her Last Name"

(Brandy Clark, Shane McAnally, Josh Osborne)

 TARGET EXCLUSIVE



with. And we got to be in the studio at the same time, which is a rare thing now with duets. These days, you can record in L.A. and the other person can be in Nashville and you can get a duet done." And yes, Reba had plans to catch Jennifer in a *Chicago* performance. "I was going to go up in early March," she says, "and then Nashville got hit with the bad weather. But I am going to see her."

Only days after *Love Somebody* is released, Reba will trek to Dallas for what is shaping up to be the biggest blowout party of the year—the 50th celebration of the Academy of Country Music Awards. The show will take place at the massive AT&T Stadium in Arlington, just outside of Dallas, and will include performances by Reba, George Strait and a parade of other stars. Reba enjoys a long and meaningful history with the ACMs, including serving 17 times as host or co-host.

"That was the first awards show I was ever on, in 1981," she recalls with sincere fondness in her voice. "And here we are many moons later. They have been very sweet to me over the years." Reba captured the ACM title of Top Female Vocalist for 1984 through 1987 and repeated as champion in the category for 1990, 1991 and 1994. At the 2002 ceremony, Reba was presented with the Home Depot Humanitarian Award for her charitable efforts.

That work continues today with her involvement with the organization Outnumber Hunger, which helps food banks across the nation. Reba has been named as a spokesperson for this year's campaign, and she'll be working in partnership with Nash Icon Music/Big Machine Label Group, General Mills and Feeding America to fight hunger. As part of the campaign, Reba's smiling

face will grace the front of boxes of Cheerios. By purchasing these specially marked items and entering the product code at outnumberrhunger.com, fans can secure five meals for their local food bank.

The project got an immediate yes from Reba when she was asked to lend a hand. “I think it’s a horrible thing for people in the United States, the land of plenty, to go hungry,” she says earnestly. “Outnum-

ber Hunger is fighting against that. They told me that one out of six people go hungry and that’s awful.”

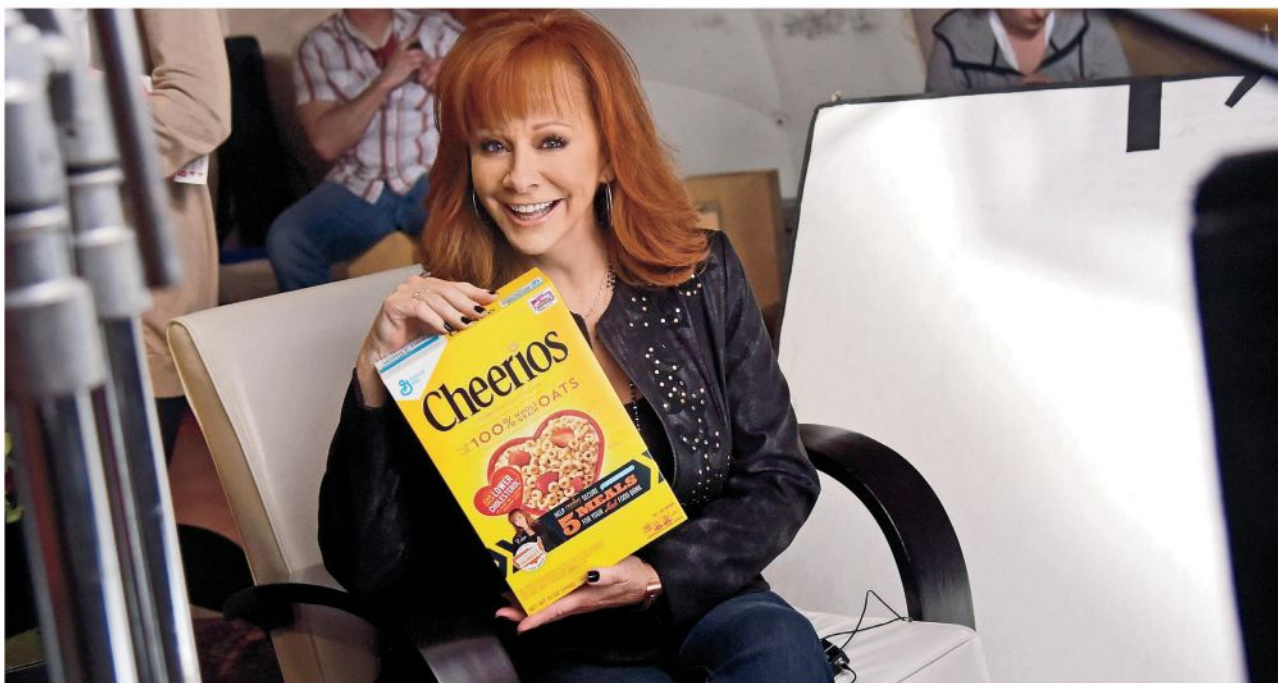
Reba tacks on the word “unfathomable” to the plight that affects millions daily. Even though she grew up the child of working-class parents in Oklahoma, she can never remember the family doing without the vital necessity of food on the table. “I have never gone a day in my life without eating something,” she says.

“If I’m hungry, I can go to the refrigerator and get something, and we assume that everybody can do that.” The program, she adds, is one that everyday people can get behind. “It’s amazing how a little effort can do so much to help,” Reba notes. “You just go to the website and it will explain everything and how to donate.”

Her offstage pursuits include another partnership, namely with Dillard’s department stores. Reba’s marking



The many faces of Reba: With her Vegas buddies Brooks & Dunn; accepting an honor at the 2002 ACM Awards and gracing the cover of a Cheerios box.





REBA'S NEW VENTURE: COSMETICS

In addition to releasing her new album, *Love Somebody*, on April 14, Reba McEntire is launching

a brand-new product. It's her own line of cosmetics called Reba Beauty.

Her longtime makeup artist Brett Freedman is working with the glamorous star on the line. "The first product from my beauty line is gonna be a slim, shiny lipstick/gloss hybrid," Reba posted on Instagram. "Launches April 7th on Amazon & my website. Excited!"

Additional Reba Beauty products will apparently be released throughout the year. Fans can find out more information on reba.com.

her 10th year of the Reba line of clothing, sold exclusively at Dillard's. Her line has expanded to include home furnishings, bedding, luggage and, this year, some new apparel items.

"We've just introduced scarves and belts, so it's slowly growing," she says, smiling. "Those have been in since March. We're building a great foundation with them." And as Reba tells it in her always-entertaining manner,

Palace in Las Vegas, billed as Reba and Brooks & Dunn: Together in Vegas. Several dates are on the books, but Reba notes that additional shows could be in the works.

"I would love to add dates," she says with enthusiasm. "They're waiting to see how the ticket sales go, which makes sense to me. That's just Business 101. But it is doing very well and they are very pleased with the ticket

night shows gets a little rough," she says candidly. "It's hard on the crew, too. I mean, I have the easy part—I just roll in and sing. But this is going to be easier on my people." Residency shows, especially in Vegas, are the new rage, and Reba puts on her best Chamber of Commerce hat to explain why. "It's not too shabby going to Vegas," she says with a broad smile. "There's great shopping, great restaurants and fun things to do." And of course, you're treated to a wonderful show in a much more intimate atmosphere, a far more delightful experience than sitting miles away in a crowded arena.

At the moment, though, the first order of business is the new album. "It's been five years since the last one," Reba points out. "It felt good to get back in the studio. It was just too much fun, and I was sad when it was through." But naturally, she's happy to have product once again. "The fans are all charged up for this," Reba says. "I'm always curious to see what the fans think. They have been with me through thick and thin, through radio, television, Broadway and when I write my books. They are always there with me. So, it's very exciting to have this out." **CW**

"IT FELT GOOD TO GET BACK IN THE STUDIO. IT WAS JUST TOO MUCH FUN, AND I WAS SAD WHEN [THE NEW ALBUM] WAS THROUGH. I'M ALWAYS CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT THE FANS THINK." REBA ON LOVE SOMEBODY

she's the brand's top customer.

Pointing to her pair of comfortable boots, she notes, "I have worn these out. I love their boots so much, and I just love the clothes. I carry my Reba luggage everywhere, so it is stuff that I use. I'm very proud to put my name on it."

Starting this summer, the calendar gets even busier. In June, Reba joins Brooks & Dunn for the first in a series of residency shows at Caesars

sales. I am totally excited about that."

Perhaps in her one concession to the ravages of a long career (she made her chart debut in 1976), Reba admits that the Vegas gig is a welcome change. Hitting the road and traveling across the country, often with back-to-back dates in different cities, doesn't quite hold the same appeal as when she was a wide-eyed youngster.

"You know, playing those one-

GOOD AS GOLD

Tune in to the **50TH ANNUAL ACADEMY AWARDS** on Sunday, April 19, at 8 p.m. ET/ 7 p.m. CT on ABC.

We take a look back as the **ACM Awards** celebrates its 50th year.

It started as a way to shine a spotlight on a burgeoning regional music scene in California and the western part of the United States. Now, 50 years later, the **ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS** is widely recognized by fans, artists and professionals as a critical piece of the country music industry, having extended well beyond Bakersfield to honor the hottest artists in the format. During those 50 years some amazing history has been made—in addition to some incredible music and entertaining television. To celebrate this golden milestone, here are 50 fun facts about the ACM and its awards show.

1. The Academy was officially founded in 1964 in Los Angeles when performer **TOMMY WIGGINS**, songwriter Eddie Miller and club owners Mickey and Chris Christensen teamed up with performers, record label executives and radio to establish the Country and Western Music Academy.



2. The organization was established to promote country music in the western 13 states and support artists on the West Coast.

3. The Academy hosted its first official country music awards show in 1966 (after three informal awards banquets held at the Christensens' Red Barrel Niteclub), honoring the industry's accomplishments during the previous year.

4. The precursor to and inspiration for the ACM Awards was the DJ's Digest Awards, which began in 1963, also at the Red Barrel Niteclub. And while awards were presented, it is said the event was more like a party. No catering. Potluck!

5. **LORNE GREENE** served as host of the awards show in 1967. If that name doesn't sound familiar, Lorne is best known for his role as patriarch Ben Cartwright on the television series *Bonanza*.



6. At the first ACM Awards, Bakersfield icon Buck Owens took home the Top Male Vocalist award while Bonnie Owens won Top Female. Newcomer Merle Haggard was named Most Promising Male Vocalist and Kay Adams Most Promising Female.

7. **BUDDY EBSEN**, who played easygoing mountaineer Jed Clampett on *The Beverly Hillbillies*, acted as the show's host in 1970.



8. The Academy's signature "hat" trophy was created in 1968. It has evolved considerably since then, growing in height in the '80s, then becoming more sleek and stylized in the early 2000s.



9. During the early 1970s, the organization changed its name to the Academy of Country and Western Music and finally to the Academy of Country Music.

10. The awards show hit the airwaves in 1972, broadcast nationally for the first time on the ABC network.

11. One half of *Hee Haw*'s pickin' and a-grinnin' team with Buck Owens, **ROY CLARK** was the first performer on the newly televised ACMs, playing "Alabama Jubilee."



12. ABC carried the show from 1972 to 1978. NBC took control of the reins from 1979 to 1997. CBS has been calling the shots from 1998 to the present day.

13. One of the early writers for the ACMs was **ALAN THICKE** from the '80s sitcom *Growing Pains*.



14. After being staged in Los Angeles since the 1960s, in 2003 the ACM Awards left L.A. for the first time and invaded Las Vegas.

15. Theaters, auditoriums and nightclubs aren't the only locales for the ACM Awards. **KNOTT'S BERRY FARM** and **DISNEYLAND** have also hosted the show.



16. In the Academy's 50-year history, only three states have hosted the event: California, Nevada and Texas (this year).

17. In 1976, **LORETTA LYNN** became the first woman to win Entertainer of the Year. She was also restricted by network censors from singing "The Pill" on the show.



18. Tanya Tucker was a mere 14 years old when she was named the ACM's Top New Female Vocalist in 1973.

19. The **DIXIE CHICKS** won both the Top New Vocal Group/Duo and Top Vocal Group/Duo awards in 1999, along with Album of the Year for *Wide Open Spaces*.



20. Following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Academy voters responded and named Alan Jackson's tribute "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)" both Single and Song of the Year and Brooks & Dunn's "Only in America" Video of the Year.

21. Taylor Swift made her awards debut at the 2007 ACM Awards, where she not only won the New Female Vocalist award, but also introduced herself to the namesake of her hit single "Tim McGraw" by singing the song to him with only her guitar as accompaniment.

22. In 2010, **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** became the first woman to win Entertainer of the Year twice. She also took home the award in 2009.



23. **TAYLOR SWIFT** matched Carrie's accomplishment by winning Entertainer of the Year in 2011 and 2012. She remains the youngest artist to win the big one.



24. **ALABAMA** holds the record for most consecutive Entertainer of the Year awards, winning five from 1982 to 1986.



25. **GARTH BROOKS** holds the record for most total Entertainer of the Year awards, winning six times during the '90s.



26. **MIRANDA LAMBERT** has won Female Vocalist of the Year a record five consecutive years from 2010 to 2014. She can add to her streak with a win this year.



27. **BRAD PAISLEY** won Male Vocalist of the Year a record five consecutive years, beginning at the 2007 ceremony.



28. **MERLE HAGGARD** holds the record for most Male Vocalist of Year awards, winning six over the course of his career.



29. **REBA McENTIRE** holds the record for most Female Vocalist of the Year awards, winning seven times.



30. Actors Patrick Duffy, Crystal Bernard, Claude Akins and Pat Buttram have all hosted or co-hosted the awards show.

31. **BROOKS & DUNN** stands as the most awarded act in ACM Awards history with a whopping 27, including three Entertainer of the Year awards and a Triple Crown trophy.



32. Five acts have been named the ACM's Artist of the Decade: Marty Robbins (1960s), Loretta Lynn (1970s), Alabama (1980s), Garth Brooks (1990s) and George Strait (2000s).

33. In 2008, fans were allowed to vote online for the Academy's coveted Entertainer of the Year award (after the professional membership had selected the nominees in that category). **KENNY CHESNEY** was the winner.



34. Six acts have won the ACM Triple Crown (Top New Artist, Male/Female Vocalist or Duo of the Year, Entertainer of the Year): Merle Haggard, Barbara Mandrell, Mickey Gilley, Brooks & Dunn, Kenny Chesney and Carrie Underwood.

35. **MARTINA McBRIDE** and Train's **PAT MONAHAN** not only sang "Marry Me" together on the 2012 ACM Awards, they also provided the wedding music for a couple who tied the knot onstage during the performance.



36. You might be a red-neck if you knew comedian **JEFF FOX-WORTHY** co-hosted the show in 1995 and 1997.



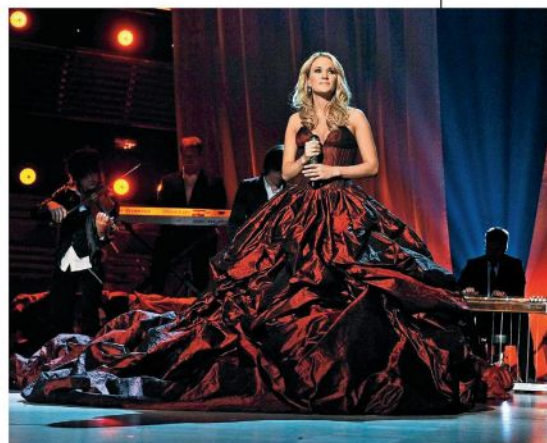
37. **REBA McENTIRE** has hosted or co-hosted the ACM Awards show 17 times.



38. One night just wasn't enough to contain all of the fun and talent, so in 2006, the ACM partnered with Fremont Street Experience for a free concert the weekend of the awards ceremony.

39. Fans continue to be part of the show today through interactive voting for Entertainer and New Artist of the Year.

40. In 2010, **CARRIE UNDERWOOD**'s red Rafael Cen-namo gown was perhaps more discussed than her Entertainer of the Year win. Because of the garment's voluminous skirt, the petite country star required assistance getting onto the stage to sing "I Told You So."



41. The ACM began incorporating its Lifting Lives charity into the show in 2009 in a special segment that often includes performers who benefit from their work. The inaugural performance featured Trace Adkins and the West Point Glee Club on "Til the Last Shot's Fired."

42. BRAD PAISLEY made a big splash at the 2010 ACM Awards when he punctuated the ending of his hit single "Water" by taking the Nestea plunge into an onstage pool.



43. George Strait has found his name on an ACM ballot for four decades.

44. In 2011, ACM Awards week got even bigger with the addition of the Fan Jam at Mandalay Bay. The companion event allows more fans access to great live performances, which are also streamed into the awards show venue.

45. Artists of the Decade **GEORGE STRAIT** and **GARTH BROOKS** shared the stage for the first time during a tribute to Dick Clark at the 2013 ACM Awards.



46. Presenters over the years have run the gamut. Members of the casts of television shows like *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *M*A*S*H* and *Happy Days* have appeared on the show, along with film and television stars like Matthew McConaughey, John Ritter and Mr. T as well as Fleetwood Mac's Mick Fleetwood and *Playboy* bunny Barbi Benton.

47. In 2015, the Academy will mark its 50th anniversary of the ACM Awards. To celebrate, the ACM partnered with Jerry Jones and the Dallas Cowboys, bringing the ACM Awards to **AT&T STADIUM** in Arlington, Texas, on April 19 for what will become the largest live awards show ever staged.



48. Surprise duets have always been a theme on the ACM Awards. In 2011, **CARRIE UNDERWOOD** was joined by Aerosmith's **STEVEN TYLER**, and **SUGARLAND** welcomed R&B star **RIHANNA** to the stage. But in 1992, Travis Tritt topped them all by bringing actor Joe Pesci to the stage.

49. This year, Garth Brooks, Kenny Chesney, Miranda Lambert, Reba, George Strait, Taylor Swift and Brooks & Dunn will receive 50th Anniversary Milestone Awards designed by David Yurman.

50. The ACM Awards have turned into a weeklong celebration that includes motorcycle rides, golf tournaments and, of course, concerts. This year's event will also host an attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest parade of pickup trucks. It's Texas. It will happen. **CW**

WILL HOGE

2015 Small Town Dreams Tour

APRIL 21

Birmingham, Ala.
Tin Roof

APRIL 22

Charlotte, N.C.
KAT Country Jam

APRIL 23

Asheville, N.C.
The Grey Eagle

MAY 1

Milwaukee
The Rave

MAY 2

St. Louis
Off Broadway

MAY 7

Little Rock, Ark.
Revolution! Music Room

MAY 8

Dallas
The Kessler

MAY 9

New Braunfels, Texas
River Road Ice House

MAY 16

St. George Island, Fla.
Rock by the Sea

MAY 29

Louisville, Ky.
Mercury Ballroom

MAY 30

Salem, Va.
Blue Ridge Music Festival

JUNE 5

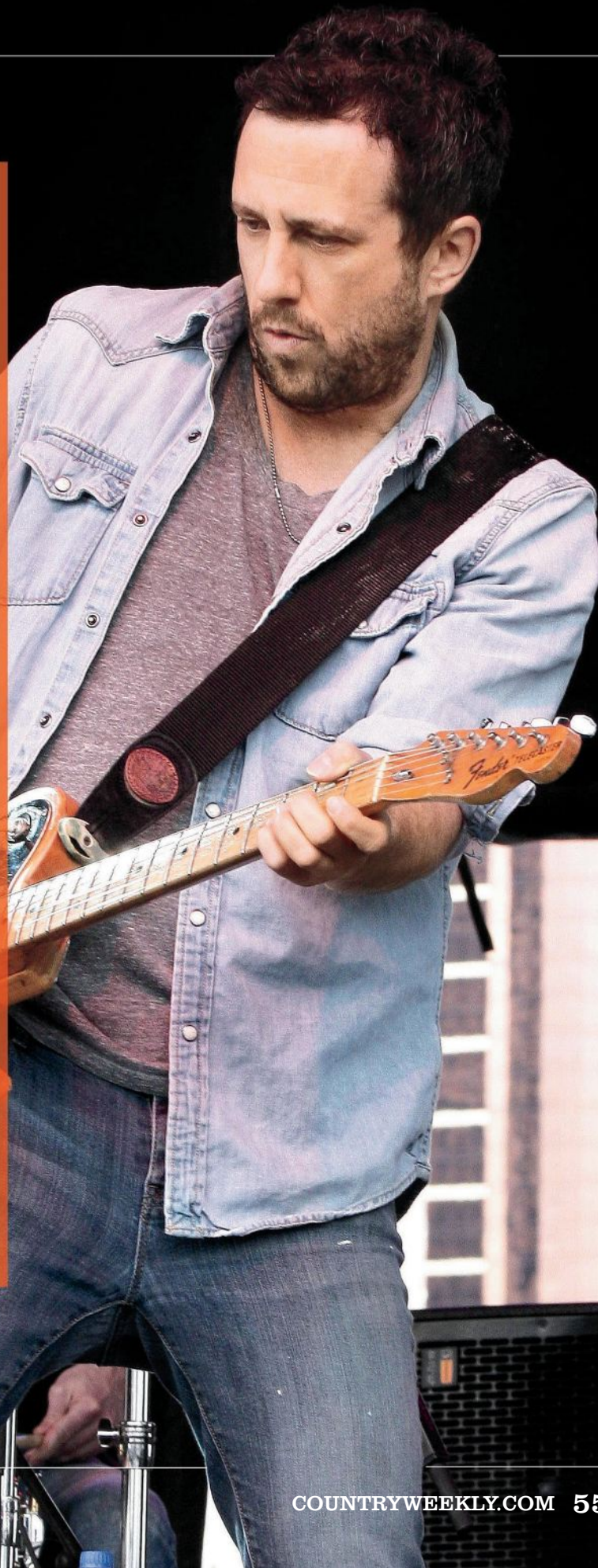
Buffalo, N.Y.
Iron Works

JUNE 6

New York
The Bowery Ballroom

JUNE 7

Uncasville, Conn.
Wolf Den at Mohegan Sun



THEY GET

Around





PHOTO COURTESY BBK MUSIC GROUP

THOMPSON SQUARE'S KEIFER AND SHAWNA THOMPSON HAVE PLENTY OF OPTIONS WHEN THEY HIT THE ROAD FOR WORK OR PLAY, INCLUDING A TRICKED-OUT BRONCO AND A COUPLE OF HEAVY-DUTY BIKES.

STORY BY BOB PAXMAN

ON THIS WINTRY afternoon in Nashville, the Studios at Berry Hill looks nothing like a recording and photography facility. Instead, it resembles a high-end auto/motorcycle showroom, where you might wish to browse among the latest models. On the floor sits a completely refurbished green 1971 Bronco, as tricked-out an off-road vehicle as you're likely to come across. On another portion of the floor, two shiny motorcycles stand proudly erect, practically begging you to give them a kickstart, get their motors running and head on down the highway.

All three are the property of Keifer and Shawna Thompson, the husband-and-wife team known as Thompson Square. The adventure-loving couple brought the vehicles in for this stylish *Country Weekly* photo shoot and are ready to talk about their passion for things that caress the road at fast speeds. And in keeping with the "vehicle" theme of the day, Keifer and Shawna are also pumped to reveal a few key details about their new single, appropriately titled "Trans Am."

The motorcycles provide the perfect short getaways for the duo when they're on the road. They're hauled around in a trailer and pulled out easily when Keifer and Shawna come to a stopping point in their travels.

Keifer strolls to the main-floor area and stands next to his bike, a gold Victory Vegas number that's quite beautiful to behold. "It's the first bike I ever bought, and it was in 2008," he says. "We did a bunch of work on it. There's a company in Boca Raton [Florida] called Conquest Customs and I really love what they do with the convertor kits. It's just amazing. The last time we were down in Palm Beach, I dropped it off and they had it for a couple months. We went a little bananas with the paint and everything," Keifer adds, laughing, "but it came out gorgeous."

The second bike gracing the floor, a 2014 Indian, features the company's



Keifer is an experienced motorcycle jockey, while Shawna's still in the learning stages.

lighted "war bonnet" and other signatures. The Indian motorcycle, which dates back to 1901, is the first American motorcycle and an iconic brand to be certain. Keifer, an experienced rider, reveals that owning one of their models has been on his wish list for years.

"I wanted a really old one like an early 1900s," Keifer begins, with a hint that such a vintage model would likely

exist well out of his price range. "But this one has that classic Indian styling. They stayed true to that," Keifer adds that the Indian is the preferred model for "two-up" or tandem riding. "It's really comfortable," he says.

Shawna, who's every bit as adventurous as her husband, actually owns her own bike, a small Harley-Davidson model. But that one's back



in their trailer, a victim of the harsh winter weather Nashville had experienced the night before. “The cold weather killed the battery,” she notes with laugh. “Mine is just a beginner bike anyway. There’s nothing really too special about it. I’m just learning to ride, but I love it.”

Mostly, they ride for fun or as a welcome escape from the confines of a

tour bus. The trailer housing the bikes can be pulled behind the bus with little difficulty. “When we get into a town and have some time, we might take the bikes out and ride,” Shawna says. “It’s a really awesome way to see the town that you’re in.” Keifer chimes in, “It also gets us off the bus.”

“We’ve never done anything like a cross-country ride together,”

Shawna says. “It’s something that we want to do eventually.”

Watching the two interact on the set, at one point playfully folding and unfolding a road map, you get the sense that they never tire of each other. Considering that they also perform, collaborate on songs and travel together, it would be easy for them to lapse into a rut of familiarity.



Check out their revamped Bronco, with new wheels and other custom features.



THOMPSON SQUARE CONT.

But not the case. They enjoy laughs and good times and plan to show that side of themselves on their upcoming new album, due later this year. The first single from the album, "Trans Am," is currently motoring up the radio charts.

"I think this new album is really going to be a reflection of how we live our life," Keifer says. That will, Keifer hopes, give fans more insight into him and Shawna as personalities, outside of their musical act. "I think there is some misconception about us," he admits after a brief pause. "Because we're a married cou-

ple, people might think that our live show might be a little tame or that our lives are kind of boring. Nothing could be further from the truth. We like to have fun and we like to party. Just because you're married doesn't mean that you stop having fun. I mean, sure, Shawna and I are married, but we're also best friends and we love to hang out with each other."

And on occasion, they'll be hanging in a newly revamped 1971 Bronco, which they're admiring on the studio floor. It's a real beauty, dark green with blindingly bright wheels and a stern chassis. The manufacturer tag may read 1971, but the



TRANS AM FEVER

As far as anyone can figure (or locate), there hasn't been a country song with the title "Trans Am" to ever hit the charts. Surprising, since the sleek, built-for-speed vehicle has been the dream machine for many a country guy, including Oklahoma native Keifer Thompson of Thompson Square.

Keifer and wife Shawna were writing with top Music Row writers Nathan Chapman and Blair Daly, and Blair arrived at the session with that exact title. "I was immediately pulled in because I've always wanted a Trans Am, like every young man," Keifer says, laughing. "I started playing guitar and came up with a riff, and it was off to the races from there. We had it done in a few hours and we all just absolutely loved it. It's got four or five different musical hooks."

The up-tempo, revved-up tune marks a major departure for the award-winning duo. "We're letting go of the reins a little bit," Keifer confides. "Everybody's pumped up about the direction we're going with this song and the new record. It'll be fun for fans to hear this side of us."

vehicle looks brand-new. How Keifer and Shawna acquired it involved an adventure of its own.

It all began through a conversation with Dean Dillon, the legendary songwriter behind George Strait's "The Chair" and "Ocean Front Property," along with hits for other artists. "We became a friends a few years back," Keifer begins. "We're always talking about old cars and stuff and I told him about wanting an old Bronco. I think he made it his mission in life to find one for me."

Dean evidently has interesting connections outside the musical landscape. He managed to locate an old Bronco outside of Little Rock. "I told him that I didn't have time to go out and get it," Keifer continues, picking

up the thread, "so he said he would go get it for me. He got a car hauler and drove all the way to Little Rock and brought it back to the studio in Nashville where we were working so I could see it. Now that tells you a lot about Dean. He is just a solid guy. He'll do anything for you."

Keifer brought the Bronco to Bay One Customs, a company outside of Nashville, for the rebuilding and refurbishing work. "We went nuts on it," Keifer admits. "It has literally been completely rebuilt, as far as the front-end suspension, the gear ratio. We put a five-speed transmission in it, and you just don't see Broncos with five-speeds. Shawna found the paint scheme."

"We knew we wanted something like Army green," Shawna says. "So

we searched for that. It has a little hint of gold when the sun hits it. It's really beautiful. We're going to have some good times in that," she sweetly adds.

For the next few months, though, the vehicle of choice is the tour bus. "We'll be on the road a lot," Keifer says. "We haven't played 'Trans Am' for audiences yet, but we're excited about previewing some of the new material. We took these last few months and spent time to write. We pushed ourselves to write quality songs for the new album and I think these are the best we've ever written. We think fans are going to love them."

And if you spot Shawna and Keifer in your town riding proudly atop their bikes, make sure to give them a wave. They'll love you for it. **CW**

Planning their next cross-country trip? Keifer and Shawna consult their handy road map.



HEAD OF THE CLASS

**Jim Ed Brown and The Browns,
The Oak Ridge Boys and Grady Martin
join the Country Music Hall of Fame.**

STORY BY BOB DOERSCHUK

2015 IS THE YEAR OF THE HARMONY GROUPS. So says Maxine Brown of The Browns, one of the three latest inductees (comprising eight individuals) into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

She is actually two-thirds correct. Two of this year's three new members are vocal groups. Before an assembly of media at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on March 25, emcee Brenda Lee heralded inductees Jim Ed Brown and The Browns in the Veterans Era category, The Oak Ridge Boys in the Modern Era category and studio guitar virtuoso Grady Martin in the category of Recording and/or Touring Musician Active Prior to 1980.

Headquartered in the museum's vast rotunda, the Hall of Fame is majestic. It's also the kind of place where Jim Ed Brown can admit to being "as nervous as a mosquito in a nudist colony," as he did during the event. With a little more perspective, each inductee—in Martin's case, his son Joshua—offered deeper reflections.



JIM ED BROWN AND THE BROWNS

You Can't Get Any Higher Than This

NEARLY HALF A CENTURY HAS passed since The Browns disbanded. Their vocal blend, honed and nostalgic, pleased fans of both hootenanny crooners and the string-sweetened countrypolitan sound emanating from Nashville.

By the time sisters Bonnie and Maxine Brown decided to retire while brother Jim Ed Brown began his long journey as a solo artist in late 1967, both country and rock had roughened rhythmically, melodically and lyrically.

Yet memories of The Browns endured. Jim Ed always added some of the trio's songs at his shows. Occasionally, one or both of his sisters would make an appearance with him at the Opry or elsewhere. And country music showed it never forgot their contributions this year by welcoming them into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Jim Ed got the news at the Country Music Association's offices. They asked him to drop by ostensibly to do a TV interview to promote his recent album, *In Style Again*. Recalling the moment, he laughs and adds, "This

Jim Ed, Bonnie (left) and Maxine Brown

is the greatest thrill you can have. You can't get any higher than this. But it made me think of something Charley Pride once said: 'Don't make me number one, because there's only one way I can go from here—and that's down!'"

Right after that, Jim Ed called Bonnie in Arkansas. "My husband and I were at a restaurant in Little Rock," she says. "I started screaming and crying and shaking, and everybody couldn't figure out what was going on."

Unfortunately, she couldn't explain her outburst to her fellow diners, since inductees are forbidden to share the news with anyone other than their most intimate relations. This, Bonnie and Jim Ed agreed, made informing Maxine a

somewhat delicate matter.

"He was kind of afraid to tell her because she loves to put things on her Facebook," Bonnie says. "So we waited a day, but then we said, 'No, you've got to tell her.'"

"I didn't believe it," Maxine insists. "Jim Ed's daughter Kim called me, but I thought it was one of my friends named Kim, so I thought she was playing a joke on me. When it finally soaked in, I started crying. After all these years, I'm so thankful that The Browns finally achieved our goal."

"We always talked about this," Jim Ed says. "But after all these years, we got to the point where I kind of brushed it aside and kept working. But finally it got here! Hot diggity dog!"





GRADY MARTIN **Grace and Class**

FROM THE 1950s ONWARD, everyone in country music knew Grady Martin, the slick-pickin' guitarist on countless hit records by Elvis Presley, Hank Williams, Buddy Holly, Patsy Cline and too many others to name.

Just ask The Oak Ridge Boys,

who tracked with him in the early 1960s. "When he came in, he was very quiet," says Joe Bon-sall. "He never said a lot, but there was one thing I always noticed about him: everything he played was right. We never had to fix a part. He was a genius

when it came to studio work."

From his pioneering work with fuzz tones on electric guitar through his fleet, atmospheric filigrees on Marty Robbins' "El Paso" and Lefty Frizzell's "Saginaw, Michigan," Grady elevated the artistry and expanded the range of country guitar.

But to Joshua Martin, he was, simply, Dad. It wasn't until he hit high school that Joshua began to understand the magnitude of his father's contributions. "We were supposed to do a report on a figure from history," he says. "There was an encyclopedia of musical people in the library. I looked through it and found Dad's name in there, so I did my paper on him. That's the first time I really asked him anything specific about his life and career."

A guitarist himself, with the band *Sleeper Agent*, Joshua now can appreciate Grady's work objectively and admiringly. "He had a grace about him, something spontaneous and classy," he reflects. "I can be listening to a record on 650 AM [WSM/Nashville], and even if they play a record I've never heard, I'm like, 'I'll bet that's Dad,' because the guitar sounds so smooth and round and full. He never needed a whole bunch of notes. Where other players might use the whole scale, he could make just a couple of notes count."

One thing never discussed at the Martin home was whether Grady would ever become a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame. That said, Joshua was thrilled to speak at the Hall of Fame press conference on behalf of his father, who died in 2001. "Before introducing me, the people backstage kept asking me if I was nervous," he recalls with a grin. "And I said, 'No, I'm just here. Dad did all the work.'"



(From left) Richard Sterban, William Lee Golden, Joe Bonsall and Duane Allen

THE OAK RIDGE BOYS **A Long Time Coming**

OVER A CAREER THAT stretches back for decades, The Oak Ridge Boys—baritone William Lee Golden, bass singer Richard Sterban, tenor Joe Bonsall and lead vocalist Duane Allen—have earned multiple Grammy, ACM, CMA and Dove awards and built a catalog that includes one double-platinum, three platinum and 12 gold albums. Their legacy is assured even as they continue to perform and record.

Still, as time passed, they couldn't help but notice that the Country Music Hall of Fame had yet to welcome them into its fold. "I was wondering if it was ever going to happen," Richard admits. "It was certainly a long time coming."

"Every year when it wasn't us,

boom, it was over for me and it was like, 'Now let's go sing.' But," Joe confesses, "I did hope it would happen someday."

That hope came true this year. All four Oaks got the news about a month before the press conference, after they had performed at the Grand Ole Opry. As they were leaving the stage, they were asked to meet with CMA CEO Sarah Trahern. They chatted with her about their upcoming LP Field appearance at CMA Music Festival.

"And then she said, 'Oh, and by the way, you guys are the newest inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame,'" Richard recalls.

"It hit us like a ton of bricks," Duane remembers. "It was more like being in shock as opposed

to breaking down. We started hugging each other, but it still didn't quite set in."

"I'm an emotional guy," Joe says. "I cry when a cat walks by. Richard is pretty stoic . . . and he had tears coming out of his eyes. That got to me as much as anything."

Now the guys have had some time to put it into perspective. "I'm thinking of the four of us on that one plaque, enshrined together as it should be, as it's always been and now as it always will be," Joe concludes. "A guy from Philly, a guy from Jersey, a guy from Texas and a guy from Alabama who, as little kids, dreamed of singing—and there we are in the Hall! This is the pinnacle." **CW**

**MUSIC VIDEOS****MIRANDA LAMBERT**

"Little Red Wagon"

RCA NASHVILLE

GRADE: B

Miranda Lambert knows the power of a compelling visual set to music: her videos for "White Liar" and "Only Prettier" proved to be funny and worthy of repeat viewing, aiding the songs' success. Her latest single, "Little Red Wagon," from the album *Platinum*, is

aiming for something similarly striking but falls short of taking it all the way. Miranda has made no secret of her admiration for pop star Beyoncé, and this clip, set in a dreary-looking motel in some dusty western locale, is Miranda trying out her boldest Beyoncé-type swagger. Miranda adds plenty of sizzle to the screen, dressed in bright hues, massive earrings and red boots (presumably Tony Lamas)—while carrying an adorable dog, à la Paris Hilton. It's a song of self-empowerment and not letting anyone sandbag you,

so Miranda's confidence brushes off on the motel's buxom cleaning lady as well as the front deskman. Later, she makes flirty eyes at the chiseled pool-cleaning guy. There's a lot of dancing and rolling around in the covers by the characters, but unfortunately no inspiring coordinated choreography or wild twist to invite multiple viewings.

— JON FREEMAN

AT A GLANCE: Miranda looks stunning in a clip that falls a touch flat.



MADDIE & TAE

"Fly"

REPUBLIC RECORDS

GRADE: **C**

Maddie & Tae flipped the script on bro country with their tongue-in-cheeky debut single and video, "Girl in a Country Song." The duo's sophomore video, for their semi-autobiographical song "Fly," takes on a decidedly more inspirational tone, encouraging girls (there are no boys in the video) to reach for the stars to accomplish their dreams. Over the course of the shoot, director Brian Lazaro (The Cadillac Three's "Party Like You") incorporates vignettes of young

girls and women in various phases of life endeavoring to overcome obstacles, including a young girl climbing a ladder and a despairing mother who is . . . well, despairing for some reason. (Create your own backstory. I like to believe she lost her Groupon.) Along the way, Maddie & Tae sit on suspended chairs perched on a wall in an effort to create the aura of vulnerability. While the metaphor is clear when coupled with the song's lyrics, the substance is somewhat muddled with the flaccid vignettes. Don't get me wrong, Maddie & Tae have never sounded better and they look regal in their Loretta Lynn-esque gowns, but the video just doesn't soar like the song does. There's also an abundance of butterflies and falling glitter, which makes me want to hop in my Barbie Corvette and run it off a cliff *Thelma & Louise* style.

— JIM CASEY

AT A GLANCE: It gets off the ground, but so did the Spruce Goose.

SAM HUNT

"Take Your Time"

MCA NASHVILLE

GRADE: **B+**

Perhaps not since Garth Brooks' landmark piece "The Thunder Rolls" has a video generated such buzz, both pro and con. And there are cases to be made for both sides. Certainly, any work that aims to address domestic violence, as this does, must be commended. On the other hand, detractors will point out, the scenes of violence with Sam coming to the rescue of an abused woman have nothing to do with the song. And yes, that's literally true, but therein lies the brilliance. Too often, we grouse about videos that do nothing more than render a literal line-by-line reading of the single. So, anything that steps outside the box, so to speak, is a welcome change of pace. Besides, the video is so well done, with expert directing from Tim Mattia, that the violence hardly



seems gratuitous. The camera work matches the almost dizzying story line, giving you a sobering point of view of what it must be like to be caught up in such a desperate, seemingly no-way-out situation. And whoever cast the video did an outstanding job. The actors seem perfectly matched for their roles. "Take Your Time" may not be to everyone's liking. But look at it this way. Sam doesn't want to take the lady's time—he wants to take her away from all this.

— BOB PAXMAN

AT A GLANCE: Edgy, gritty and makes a statement—what a concept.



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Spotlighting artists who
reside on the fringes
of country music

JOHN MORELAND

FOR FANS OF:

Bruce Springsteen, Steve Earle, Tom Petty

AT LEAST TWO SONGS on John Moreland's new album, *High on Tulsa Heat*, reference places in Oklahoma, including the title track. They're grounded in a specific setting, giving Tulsa resident John the freedom to make his personal stories of heartbreak into something more universal.

"People have asked me, if I was living somewhere else would I be writing the same stuff," muses John, calling from home before he launches his tour. "On one hand I feel like I would, but then on the other hand if I lived in Vermont I probably wouldn't be talking about tornadoes and whatnot. That's all subconscious, I guess. It creeps in there."

The driving title track describes the dizzying aspect of a relationship, a feeling that mirrors heat exhaustion before the terrible come-down kicks in and you'd rather be anywhere but your hometown. John actually repurposed the phrase from another song. "I had an old song called 'High on East Texas Heat.' I used to hang out in Tyler, Texas, a lot," he recalls. "I used to stay at my friend's house with no air conditioning. I remember being awake for a long time and just out there in the heat, just feeling delirious. That was probably like 10 years ago. I never did anything with the song and I liked the phrase. I like the idea of a certain midwestern brand of melancholy, maybe."

That melancholy feeling extends through more stripped-down offerings like "Cherokee" and "Cleveland County Blues," the latter of which compares a lover to an Oklahoma tornado indiscriminately tearing through

a town. It's hard not to hear fellow lyrical wizards like Steve Earle and Lucinda Williams in these tales from the Sooner State or in John's weathered voice, but it's a little more surprising considering that he spent much of his youth kicking around in Oklahoma's punk scene before finding his footing as a songwriter.

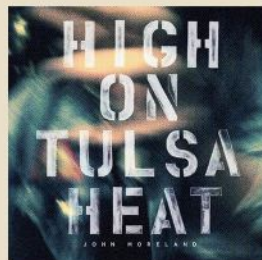
"When I listened to Steve Earle and that led me to Guy Clark and Townes Van Zandt, I started to realize there's this whole other kind of songwriting that's its own thing and it's not just to make noise so you can fill the time you're onstage," he explains. "I was really drawn to that and how lyrics can put the right words to the right melody and all of a sudden it just becomes way bigger than just the words themselves."

That pursuit and attention to lyrical detail has won John fans from all over, even back in his Tulsa hometown, with its support-local-artists mentality. "It took me a long time to take part in the local scene here," he acknowledges. "I used to always play Oklahoma City, and then I started touring a lot," he says. "Now I've sort of come back and people have sort of taken me in as one of their own. But I had to do it the long way."

— JON FREEMAN

ESSENTIAL LISTENING:

- "High on Tulsa Heat"
- "Cherokee"
- "Sad Baptist Rain"



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High on Tulsa Heat.
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[STARS UP CLOSE]

→ Country Weekly readers rub elbows with their favorite stars . . .

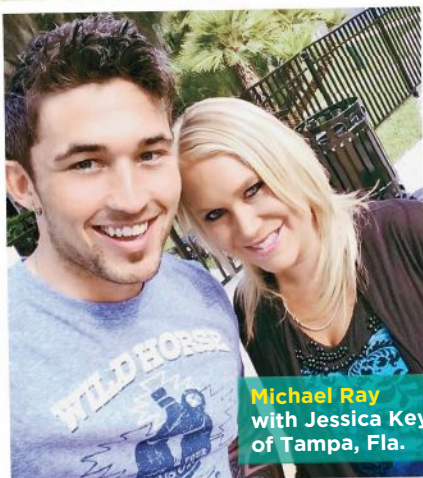
Jerrod Niemann
with Leslie and
Saydie Roling
of DeWitt, Iowa



**Sarah Paul of Forreston,
Ill., with Cassadee Pope**



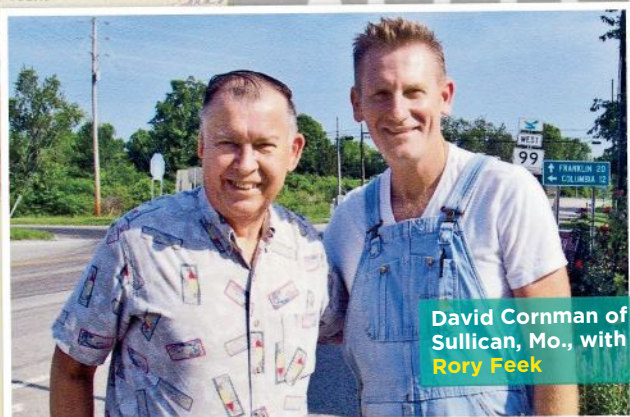
Michael Ray
with Jessica Key
of Tampa, Fla.



**Katie Brooks of Dobson,
N.C., with Raelynn**



**David Cornman of
Sullican, Mo., with
Rory Feek**



**Monica Rutherford of
Orange County, Calif.,
with Charlie Worsham**



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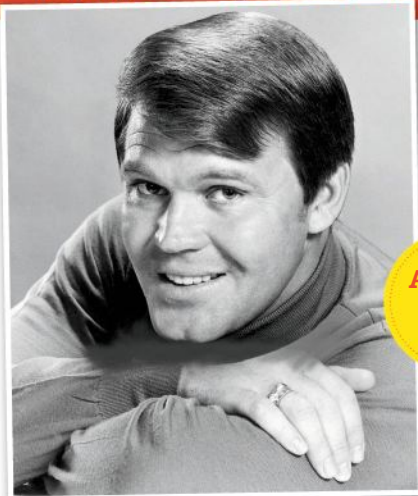
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[FLASHBACK]

THIS WEEK IN COUNTRY



**APRIL
19,
1969**

GLEN CAMPBELL was known to have a keen instinct for great songs, and that knack came into play with a track he discovered called "Galveston." Glen loved the poignant tune, written by Jimmy Webb, but the version that he heard was too slow. In his book, *Rhinestone Cowboy: An Autobiography*, Glen recalls, "I again had that feeling that tells me I'm on to something when I decided to change the tempo of 'Galveston' and recorded it much faster." The decision paid off for Glen. "Galveston" climbed to the top of the charts on April 19, 1969, and stayed at No. 1 for three weeks.

Live from New York . . . it's Dolly! The one and only **DOLLY PARTON** brought her musical and comedic skills to NBC's *Saturday Night Live* as she hosted the episode that aired on April 15, 1989. One memorable sketch featured Dolly and the *SNL* cast members sitting around as Dolly told some of her "mountain stories" from her childhood in East Tennessee. But everyone soon realized that Dolly's stories were actually the plot lines from classic TV shows like *Bonanza* and *I Love Lucy*, even though Dolly insisted that she grew up without a television set. Dolly also performed her hit single "Why'd You Come in Here Lookin' Like That."



**APRIL
15,
1989**

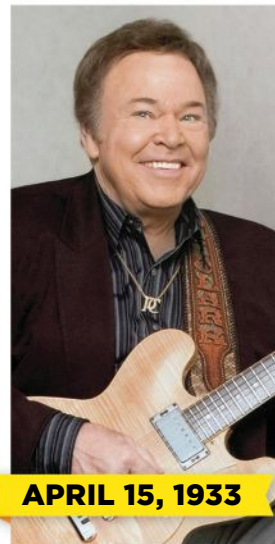


**APRIL
14,
2007**

TIM MCGRAW's 10th career album, *Let It Go*, debuted on the charts April 14, 2007, hitting No. 1 on both the *Billboard* Top Country Albums chart and the *Billboard* 200, which covers all genres of music. *Let It Go* carries some historical significance, as it produced seven singles, the most from any of Tim's albums. One of those singles was the emotional "If You're Reading This," which was not originally on the album. Tim performed the song at the Academy of Country Music Awards in May. Fan reaction was so strong that the label reissued the album to include the live track a month after the song entered the charts. And in an interesting note, the album included a song called "Shotgun Rider," which was not the same tune that hit No. 1 for Tim in 2014. Guess he just likes the title.

To read more on **Dolly Parton**, go to CountryWeekly.com/magazine/vault

BIRTHDAYS



APRIL 15, 1933

ROY CLARK

has achieved success in both music and television. Roy starred in several episodes of *The Beverly Hillbillies* and co-hosted the musical-comedy series *Hee Haw* from 1969 to 1992. In 1973, he won the Country Music Association award for Entertainer of the Year. Roy was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2009.

**APRIL 13, 1952
SAM BUSH**

**APRIL 14, 1932
LORETTA LYNN**

**APRIL 18, 1947
WALT
RICHMOND
of The Tractors**

**APRIL 18, 1952
JIM SCHOLTEN
of Sawyer Brown**

**APRIL 19, 1968
BEKKA
BRAMLETT**

A portrait of Adam Levine, a man with a beard and short dark hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. A microphone is visible on the left side of the frame. The background is a warm, out-of-focus interior.

ADAM LEVINE

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WEEK ENDING APRIL 4, 2015

ALBUMS



Asleep at the Wheel's third tribute album to the King of Western Swing reenters the Top 20 at No. 11, surpassing its debut-week peak of No. 14.

SINGLES

Cole Swindell's latest single "Ain't Worth the Whiskey," which is approaching gold status, is now the singer/songwriter's third *Billboard* No. 1 song.



Thomas Rhett—future King of Country Disco?—boogies away at No. 1 after a seven-week run in the Top 10.

CMT VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	1	SPRING BREAK . . . CHECKIN' OUT LUKE BRYAN
2	2	MONTEVALLO SAM HUNT
3	4	OLD BOOTS, NEW DIRT JASON ALDEAN
4	6	ANYTHING GOES FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
5	7	IGNITE THE NIGHT CHASE RICE
6	8	THE OUTSIDERS ERIC CHURCH
7	9	GREATEST HITS: DECADE #1 CARRIE UNDERWOOD
8	10	PLATINUM MIRANDA LAMBERT
9	12	CRASH MY PARTY LUKE BRYAN
10	3	SHANIA: STILL THE ONE—LIVE FROM VEGAS SHANIA TWAIN
11	30	STILL THE KING: CELEBRATING THE MUSIC OF BOB WILLS AND HIS TEXAS PLAYBOYS • ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL
12	5	SPRING BREAK . . . THE SET LIST: THE COMPLETE SPRING BREAK COLLECTION ZINEPAK • LUKE BRYAN
13	13	GREATEST HITS SO FAR . . . ZAC BROWN BAND
14	15	COLE SWINDELL COLE SWINDELL
15	18	PAIN KILLER LITTLE BIG TOWN
16	14	MAN AGAINST MACHINE GARTH BROOKS
17	16	JUST AS I AM BRANTLEY GILBERT
18	17	BRINGING BACK THE SUNSHINE BLAKE SHELTON
19	22	THE BIG REVIVAL KENNY CHESNEY
20	20	I DON'T DANCE LEE BRICE
21	19	THE UNDERDOG AARON WATSON
22	23	SUNDOWN HEAVEN TOWN TIM MCGRAW
23	21	THE COWBOY RIDES AWAY: LIVE FROM AT&T STADIUM • GEORGE STRAIT
24	25	RISER DIERKS BENTLEY
25	26	IT GOES LIKE THIS THOMAS RHETT

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	3	AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY COLE SWINDELL
2	4	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
3	5	HOMEGROWN ZAC BROWN BAND
4	6	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
5	7	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
6	8	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
7	1	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDRIDGE
8	2	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
9	10	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY
10	11	RAISE 'EM UP KEITH URBAN FEATURING ERIC CHURCH
11	12	A GUY WALKS INTO A BAR TYLER FARR
12	13	SMOKE A THOUSAND HORSES
13	15	DON'T IT BILLY CURRINGTON
14	14	WHAT WE AIN'T GOT JAKE OWEN
15	16	WILD CHILD KENNY CHESNEY WITH GRACE POTTER
16	17	DIAMOND RINGS AND OLD BARSTOOLS TIM MCGRAW WITH CATHERINE DUNN
17	19	BABY BE MY LOVE SONG EASTON CORBIN
18	18	LITTLE RED WAGON MIRANDA LAMBERT
19	23	SIPPIN' ON FIRE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
20	20	SHE DON'T LOVE YOU ERIC PAISLEY
21	22	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD
22	21	CRUSHIN' IT BRAD PAISLEY
23	25	LOVE ME LIKE YOU MEAN IT KELSEA BALLERINI
24	26	LOVE YOU LIKE THAT CANAN SMITH
25	24	HARD TO BE COOL JOE NICHOLS
26	27	KISS YOU IN THE MORNING MICHAEL RAY
27	28	YOUNG & CRAZY FRANKIE BALLARD
28	30	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER
29	29	TROUBLE GLORIANA
30	32	ONE HELL OF AN AMEN BRANTLEY GILBERT

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	MAKE ME WANNA THOMAS RHETT
2	3	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
3	4	MEAN TO ME BRETT ELDRIDGE
4	6	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
5	5	HOMEGROWN HONEY DARIUS RUCKER
6	7	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
7	8	TAKE YOUR TIME SAM HUNT
8	1	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
9	11	AIN'T WORTH THE WHISKEY COLE SWINDELL
10	10	SAY YOU DO DIERKS BENTLEY

SOURCE: CMT



Miranda Lambert and rescue dog Jamie debut at No. 8 in a clip shot by Trey Fanjoy ("Somethin' Bad").

GAC VIDEOS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/ARTIST
1	2	LITTLE TOY GUNS CARRIE UNDERWOOD
2	1	LONELY TONIGHT • BLAKE SHELTON FEAT. ASHLEY MONROE
3	5	LONELY EYES CHRIS YOUNG
4	7	JUST GETTIN' STARTED JASON ALDEAN
5	3	TALLADEGA ERIC CHURCH
6	4	SUN DAZE FLORIDA GEORGIA LINE
7	6	DRINKING CLASS LEE BRICE
8	—	LITTLE RED WAGON MIRANDA LAMBERT
9	10	PRAY FOR YOU THE SWON BROTHERS
10	8	LAY LOW JOSH TURNER

SOURCE: GAC

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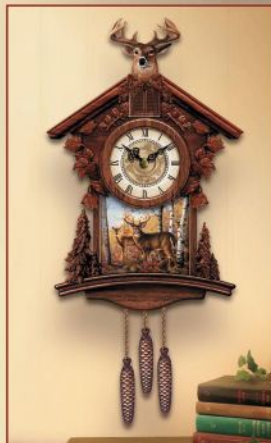
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I like it when ...
It's warm.

My favorite TV show is ...
A tie between Game of Thrones and Downton Abbey right now.

My favorite color is ...
Garnet.

If I could change one thing about myself it would be ...
To be able to eat anything I want and not gain weight!

The one word that describes my day today is ...
Busy.

I can't live without ...
My family.

A guy can never have too many ...
Children. You can have as many as you want, and as long as you want that many, it's not too many.

I wish I were ...
A professional golfer. I wouldn't get anything else done, but you couldn't complain because that would be my job.

Music is ...
Everything.

The first thing I do in the morning is ...
Play Words With Friends. I'm addicted to it.

I would love to do a duet with ...
Reba. That would be good I think.





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